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CITIES AND TOWNS TO BEACON HILL: WE NEED ADDITIONAL REVENUE FOR TRANSPORTATION

Greater Boston mayors and managers support 15 cent increase to the gas tax and other funding mechanisms to advance equity, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support transit oriented development

BOSTON – Wednesday, Nov. 13, 2019 – Today, three broad coalitions of municipal officials from throughout Eastern Massachusetts called on the Commonwealth to raise significant new revenue and dedicate it to rescuing the state’s ailing and congested transportation system.

Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh, Somerville Mayor Joe Curtatone and the communities of the Metropolitan Mayors Coalition, together with mayors and managers of the North Shore Coalition and leaders from the Commuter Rail Communities Coalition, are calling on the Legislature and Governor Charlie Baker to invest significant new revenue in transportation.

The Metro Mayors Coalition, an organization of 15 communities in the urban core of metropolitan Boston, announced their support for **a 15-cent increase in the gas tax** and other vehicle fees, which would infuse our struggling transportation system with roughly \$450 million a year in new revenue.

In addition to the gas tax increase, the Metro Mayors Coalition identified several other funding mechanisms that it supports, including: expanding tolling to more highways; allowing a portion of toll revenue to support transit, which would help to reduce roadway congestion; expanding municipal revenue-raising tools heavily used in other states, such as regional ballot initiatives and value capture; collaborating with other states in the Northeast U.S. to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through the “cap and invest” system known as the Transportation Climate Initiative (TCI); and increasing surcharges for Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) like Uber and Lyft.

The funds raised from these mechanisms would be invested in ways that advance equity, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, encourage “transit-oriented development” and connect residents to the places they need to go. Investments would include:

- enhancing safety and reducing congestion on our roads and bridges;



- modernizing and expanding transit systems, including but not limited to the MBTA; and
- creating world-class infrastructure for cyclists, pedestrians and people with disabilities.

“The actions we take now will define Boston and our region for the next 10 years and the next generation,” said Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh. “We need to take the essential next steps to improve mobility in our city and our state, and increasing revenue for critical infrastructure is needed to ensure our current and future residents are able to move around the region in an equitable, affordable and reliable manner.”

“I urge the Legislature and the Administration to act quickly to find reliable source of funding for transportation—such as the gas tax—and to look at new ways of funding and improving our public transportation system,” said Somerville Mayor Joseph Curtatone, chairman of the Metro Mayors Coalition. “We have to think bigger than just repairing what’s broken—we need to invest today in a transit system that will work for years to come, which we won’t be able to do with just our current funding mechanisms. Having a safe, reliable transit system is crucial to so many of our other goals and values—it’s good for equity, it’s good for the environment and it’s good for the economy.”

The North Shore Coalition, a group of 18 cities and towns north of Boston, and the Commuter Rail Communities Coalition, which represents the many cities and towns served and impacted by the commuter rail, approved similar resolutions calling upon legislators and the Governor to prioritize transportation funding.

Early this month, Salem Mayor Kim Driscoll and the North Shore Coalition announced their vision for transportation improvements, pairing it with specific principles for how to raise the money needed to make the vision a reality. Over 100 people gathered in Salem on Nov. 1 to demonstrate their support.

Led by Lynn Mayor Thomas McGee and Bedford Town Manager Sarah Stanton, members of the Commuter Rail Communities Coalition also agreed on priority funding principles. The Coalition is an alliance of mayors and town managers/administrators that coordinates advocacy for short- and long-term improvements to the rail network.

In addition to calling on the state to raise additional funds, all three coalitions are also seeking something their colleagues in much of the country already have: tools to raise money locally for critical local and regional transportation projects. These include municipal revenue-raising tools such as value capture, local and regional ballot initiatives and transportation improvement districts, which would help cities and towns to address local needs, give residents a greater say in meeting local transportation challenges and act as a down payment for transformative transportation improvements.

“Cities and towns are asking for the state’s help in meeting our pressing transportation challenges, but they are also looking for tools that can help local government to play an active role. The federal government, the Commonwealth, localities and the private sector must all be at the table—no one can do this alone,” said Rebecca Davis, deputy director of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.



Framingham Mayor Yvonne M. Spicer said, “To ensure that Massachusetts residents can work and live efficiently, we need to invest in a more robust transportation system. Here in MetroWest, we depend on the roads and bridges, so their upkeep is critical. But we also have a growing regional transit system, which serves people who can’t drive while helping to reduce congestion on the roads.”

The three coalitions also agree on the need for a 15-cent gas tax increase, expanded tolling, increased TNC surcharges and implementation of TCI.

“Over three dozen municipal leaders representing millions of Massachusetts residents are all calling for the same tools to fund transportation,” said Lynn Mayor Thomas McGee. “We know that making our transportation system reliable, stress-free, affordable and green is necessary if we want to support the many people who want to live and work here. These funding mechanisms are necessary to get us the transportation system we need today and help us plan for the future.”

“The Greater Boston area has the worst congestion in the nation, and suburban commuters bear the brunt of increasing traffic,” said Salem Mayor Kim Driscoll. “To alleviate congestion and the long commutes and greenhouse gas emissions that come with it, we need to invest seriously in solutions to get people out of their cars and onto public transit.”

The groups further committed to work with quasi-public and private entities to leverage all avenues available to raise revenue.

“We have to work closely with our partners at MassPort, for example, as we have conversations about transportation improvements,” said Mayor Joe Sullivan of Braintree. “We need to be thinking longer term so that we can plan for the transportation system that will work for our residents for the next 20 and 30 years.”

All three coalitions committed to ensuring that low-income workers and residents can travel affordably throughout the region, with improved access to jobs, homes, schools and parks.

“We cannot continue our historic pattern of under-investing in transit, disproportionately burdening low-income communities and communities of color. These groups need affordable, efficient and reliable ways to get around,” said Chelsea City Manager Thomas Ambrosino. “We need to prioritize equity if we want to link everyone in our region to opportunities.”

“A reliable transportation system that connects the entire Commonwealth is a cornerstone of long-term economic vitality,” said Sarah Stanton, Town Manager of Bedford. “When we invest in local roads and multi-modal infrastructure, we make it safer to get around our communities. When we connect people to reliable transit, we alleviate congestion and its negative impacts. We need to have a predictable revenue stream in order to achieve our shared vision and to meet our needs today and into the future.”



About the Metropolitan Mayors Coalition

Chaired by Somerville Mayor Joe Curtatone, the Metro Mayors Coalition is a group of 15 cities and towns in the urban core of Metro Boston whose leaders gather to exchange information and create solutions for common problems. The municipal officials in this group represent more than 1.4 million residents in the cities and towns of Arlington, Boston, Braintree, Brookline, Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett, Malden, Medford, Melrose, Newton, Quincy, Revere, Somerville and Winthrop. Learn more: www.mapc.org/get-involved/coalitions/mmc/

About the North Shore Coalition

Chaired by Salem Mayor Kim Driscoll, the North Shore Coalition is an organization of 18 cities and towns on the North Shore of Metropolitan Boston. The municipal officials comprising this group represent nearly 400,000 residents from Beverly, Danvers, Essex, Gloucester, Hamilton, Ipswich, Lynn, Manchester-by-the-Sea, Marblehead, Middleton, Nahant, Peabody, Rockport, Salem, Saugus, Swampscott, Topsfield and Wenham. Learn more: www.mapc.org/get-involved/coalitions/north-shore-coalition

About the Commuter Rail Communities Coalition

Co-chaired by Lynn Mayor Tom McGee and Bedford Town Manager Sarah Stanton, the Commuter Rail Communities Coalition is an alliance of mayors and town/city managers/administrators that seeks to identify concerns and ideas on commuter rail issues and opportunities and advocate for short- and long-term improvements to the rail network. The group is facilitated by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, 495/MetroWest Partnership, Transportation for Massachusetts, the MBTA Advisory Board and TransitMatters. Learn more: https://www.t4ma.org/commuter_rail