

Massachusetts State Senate
The State House
Boston, MA 02133

May 16, 2019

Regional Transit Authorities in the FY2020 Budget

Honorable Members of the Senate:

We, a group of elected, nonprofit, community, and business leaders who support RTAs and their riders, support amendment 1136, which would provide \$90.5 million in base funding for the regional transit authority (RTA) line item (1595-6370) in the FY2020 budget, and identifies separate, additional funding for performance targets and innovations, subject to Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between RTAs and MassDOT. Stable base funding is essential to protect riders from service cuts, and for RTAs to provide predictable service as they continue to improve performance and accountability. We are very pleased that the Senate Ways and Means budget includes language that ties state assistance to RTAs to inflation.

To count any MOU-based funding towards the base, as the Senate Ways and Means budget does, amounts to a cut in service which penalizes riders who are transit-dependent. Here is why: MOUs and the underlying performance targets take months to develop, and the transit service that results is not assured to continue. As an example, the \$4 million in MOU-based funding that the legislature voted as part of the FY 2019 budget has still not been released, 10 ½ months into the fiscal year, and several service cuts have not been restored as a result.

Senators may recall that the FY 2019 budget also established the Task Force on RTA Performance and Funding. Constituted in October 2018, the Task Force completed its work and delivered a report to the legislature on April 5, 2019, titled *A Vision for the Future of Massachusetts' Regional Transit Authorities*.

This Task Force report included several recommendations to improve service. These included \$90.5 million in base funding from the state budget; indexing of future state appropriations to CPI; establishment of MOUs with MassDOT to ensure future performance goals; and other recommendations to promote accountable, statewide public transit.

In conclusion, we cite the first recommendation from *Choices for Stewardship*, the December 2018 report of the Baker Administration's Commission on the Future of Transportation:

1. Prioritize investment in public transit as the foundation for a robust, reliable, clean, and efficient transportation system.

In this spirit, we thank the Senate for making investment in public transit a priority for FY 2020.

Respectfully submitted,

LIST OF CO-SIGNERS