



## Statement on Governor Baker's Legislative Proposal:

### An Act for a Reliable, Sustainable Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

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April 23, 2015

The Governor unveiled legislation on April 22 aimed at stabilizing the MBTA after this winter's historic snowfall exposed the fragility of the Boston region's public transit system. We are grateful to the Administration for their prompt attention to the issues that were revealed after this winter, and to their commitment to rapidly addressing transportation challenges that have percolated for decades.

It is critical that the MBTA operate efficiently, that it be governed in a way that allows the Governor to solve problems at the agency, and that we enact reforms to regain the public's trust. As we collectively consider the administration's proposals, it is critical to keep the focus on advancing solutions to improve the reliability and quality of service of the MBTA for the region's residents.

We have concerns about several of the proposals included in the legislation, specifically the imposition of a new limit on contract assistance to the MBTA, the elimination of General Fund transfers to the Commonwealth Transportation Fund, and the removal of the fare cap. All of these changes would reverse important components of the Transportation Finance Act of 2013. These three proposals could curtail critical MassDOT and MBTA investments while at the same time forcing riders to pay more for service that has not improved.

Those of us who use the T, along with transportation officials, businesses, and many others have advocated for increased investments in the MBTA to improve and enhance service. We have supported this solution because every previous report written by experts on the MBTA clearly showed that the MBTA didn't have enough money to meet its operating budget today, let alone enough money to improve the system for the future.

Today's proposal is predicated on the assumption that the MBTA can balance its operating budget without the financial assistance anticipated in the 2013 Act. The Special Panel's report, and many reports before it, demonstrates that the MBTA's operating deficit will continue to grow, likely due to rising energy, materials, and health care costs. To close this gap, we expect the proposed legislation will result in the MBTA needing to both cut service and steeply raise fares, hurting people who need the MBTA to access economic and educational opportunities.

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Making these changes to the 2013 Act would be premature. The MBTA should act quickly to enact some of the cost-saving reforms recommended in the Special Panel report, many of which it already has the authority to implement. As these reforms are implemented, the MBTA should provide a report to the legislature on the impact to the MBTA's operating deficit. This will provide data and information that will allow the Legislature to assess whether a change in law is needed and how to meet the MBTA's revenue needs.

We are eager to work with the Legislature on the Governor's proposal and look forward to a final bill that addresses many of the concerns raised in the Special Panel's report while also protecting the system that we have now and need for tomorrow.