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#### Massachusetts Transportation Infrastructure

* **Support: An Act relative to regional (transportation) ballot initiatives** - Filed by Representatives Ciccolo and Lewis ([**H.2737**](https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/H2737)) (currently in House Ways & Means) and Senator Friedman ([**S.1828**](https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/S1828)) (currently in Senate Ways & Means)

Massachusetts’ multi-modal transportation network, that includes our streets and highways, bridges, railroads, bike and pedestrian paths, transit, buses, and municipal fleets, is foundational to the economic wellbeing of the Commonwealth. Ongoing investments in this network are essential to support the safe and efficient transport of goods and people—a critical element to ensure resilience and stability in our economy and communities.

***We support legislation and policies that provide the Commonwealth and its communities with the resources needed to ensure transportation infrastructure is in a state of good repair while supporting an effective and efficient transition to new energy sources.***

We urge the Legislature to support:

* Targeted funding for road, bridge, sidewalk, path, and other transportation infrastructure maintenance, repair, and construction.
  + Statewide there are 5120 bridges in Massachusetts, almost 2000 of which are 50–70 years in age. MassDOT’s Accelerated Bridge Program helped to reduce the number of structurally deficient bridges, but more needs to be done.
  + 30,000 miles of roads and bridges under municipal control (representing nearly 90% of all road miles statewide.) Cities and towns need consistent and adequate support to maintain these roads and bridges.
* Targeted funding for the MBTA: In November 2023, the MBTA’s updated analysis of its State of Good Repair (SGR) Index, which measures the Authority’s capital asset needs, was raised to $24.5 billion.
* Both the House’s & Senate’s FY2025 budgets include significant Fair Share Transportation funding for the MBTA, the Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) and MassDOT. For the MBTA, their capital budget needs are increasing significantly in the years ahead to address a backlog of safety improvements, modernization projects, and climate resiliency needs.
* Governor Healey’s Transportation Funding Task Force is expected to make recommendations at the end of CY2024. We urge the legislature to implement recommendations early in the next legislative session, including a timely review of alternatives including vehicle miles travelled, congestion pricing and other alternative methods to generate transportation revenue.
  + The 2022 climate legislation committed Massachusetts to selling only new Zero Emission Vehicles by 2035. Gas tax revenues will continue to diminish in relationship with emissions reductions. Revenue to replace lost gas tax is needed.
  + We support exploration of alternative revenue streams to offset lost gas tax revenue. For example, a Road User Charge may be an efficient means to replace the current gas tax.
* Funding to support fleet and equipment electrification
  + The energy transition is underway, and transportation agencies and communities need dependable fiscal resources to make the transition. Funding to purchase electric vehicles, new equipment, or support for charging station infrastructure and siting is needed across the Commonwealth to get past initial investment challenges.
  + The MBTA and RTAs need a consistent and reliable funding stream to address long term investments in equipment and systems. Investment of general funds in public transportation systems is essential for the development and enhancement of our public transportation systems across the Commonwealth.
  + Beyond initial capital investments, communities and agencies will need sustained support to continue to fund the upkeep and expansion of electric fleets.
* Transportation-focused workforce development
  + From municipal DPW positions to staff engineers, laborers and operators, the Commonwealth is experiencing a shortage of skilled transportation-focused workers. Without significant investment in expanding this workforce, the Commonwealth and its municipalities will struggle to provide the workforce required to plan, design, construct and operate and maintain the transportation systems of the future.
  + Further, we support upskilling existing workers and investing in workforce development to support the energy transition. Workers are needed to drive and maintain electric fleets and associated infrastructure. We must all work to ensure that the Commonwealth is investing in both human and physical capital.

**ACTION REQUESTED**

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* *Re-implement targeted formula-based funding to cities and towns (like the Winter Recovery Assistance Program) that will help to bridge local-level funding gaps.*
* ***Support a multiyear increase to Chapter 90 funding****, enabling municipalities to better plan and implement transportation projects.*
* ***Support new revenue for transportation, including a pilot project for considering alternatives to the gas tax such as road user charges[[1]](#endnote-1)***
* *Support initiatives that will help offset investments in the energy transition.*

1. **Considerations in launching road use charging programs**

   As gas tax revenues recede and the state and federal government seek new and more sustainable mechanisms for funding highway transportation, road use charging (RUC) is emerging as a viable option.

   RUC repositions transportation as a pay-for-use utility, charging motorists a fee per mile driven rather than a tax on the gallons of fuel consumed. Many states are either researching RUC, implementing pilot programs or have enacted legislation approving implementation.

   **Assessing RUC’s value**

   There are three main reasons why road user charging is gaining traction:

   * **It’s fair.** Road use charging is, first and foremost, considered fair. Everyone pays in direct proportion to their use. If Motorist A drives twice as far as Motorist B, A pays twice as much as B does. If Motorist A drives an electric vehicle and Motorist B drives a gas-powered vehicle, both still pay a fee proportional to the distance they drive. No one vehicle type is charged more than another.
   * **It’s flexible.** DOTs can tailor the scope and pricing of road user charging to fund specific needs. While at its heart, RUC is designed as a replacement for the Motor Fuel Tax, it can also serve other purposes. These uses might include charging according to a vehicle’s wear and tear on the roadways, its carbon emissions profile its location on the transportation network or its contribution to congestion. RUC can be customized to influence specific travel habits and achieve specific desired outcomes in a jurisdiction.
   * **It’s future ready.** Road user charging is a future-ready funding source that will continue to generate revenue as vehicle types evolve and more fuel-efficient vehicles are purchased. In addition, the collection method can be incorporated seamlessly into future digital platforms, leveraging telematics to report vehicle characteristics (speed, fuel consumption, location, distances traveled, etc.); and apps that can provide value-added services for motorists, as well as paying a RUC fee.

   [↑](#endnote-ref-1)