

August 5, 2011

The Honorable Deval Patrick
The Honorable Tim Murray
Office of the Governor
Massachusetts State House, Room 280
Boston MA 02133

Dear Governor Patrick and Lieutenant Governor Murray:

As concerned Massachusetts citizens and taxpayers, we write to applaud your recent statements about the importance of finding new revenue to support the Commonwealth's transportation system and in response to US Senator Scott Brown's letter to Governor Patrick yesterday, which expressed "serious concern" about the possibility that the Commonwealth would raise the "gas tax as part of a combination of proposals to address transportation funding."

Massachusetts faces a transportation funding crisis – the Commonwealth is falling behind by hundreds of millions of dollars every year in investments we should be making to maintain, preserve and upgrade our roads, bridges and transit systems. We applaud you for your courage in raising the issue of the need for additional transportation investment and urge you – and other elected officials – to remain open-minded about the best way to ensure that Massachusetts has the resources needed to invest in our transportation infrastructure, an essential engine of the state's economy.

We also remind you that Senator Brown's statement that "Massachusetts motorists already pay a higher gas tax than the national average" is simply incorrect. Massachusetts currently levies a 21 cents/gallon (cpg) tax on gasoline, which was last increased on January 1, 1991. When other state taxes applicable to Massachusetts and the federal gasoline tax of 18.4 cents/gallon are included, Massachusetts motorists pay 41.9 cents/gallon in combined local, state and federal taxes. A report produced by Ernst and Young for the Urban Land Institute and issued in May¹ surveyed all local and state gasoline taxes nationwide and found that the national average is 48.1 cents/gallon, about 15% above the Massachusetts rates. Gas taxes are much higher in neighboring states such as Rhode Island (51.4 cpg), New York (65.6 cpg) and Connecticut (63.6 cpg). Our gas taxes are closer to those in states like Louisiana, West Virginia and Missouri than those in states such as California and Illinois, which are our economic competitors for both talent and jobs and which have chosen to levy higher gas taxes in order invest in their transportation infrastructure and economy.

We do not endorse the gasoline tax or any particular revenue option at this time but we do believe that the time is long since past for a serious policy conversation on how Massachusetts can find the revenue needed to invest in our aging transportation infrastructure. We draw your attention to recent reports issued by Northeastern University's Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy and the Conservation Law Foundation² as well as one issued by A Better City³, which analyze a variety of potential revenue options.

¹ *Infrastructure 2001: A Strategic Priority*, available at http://www.uli.org/sitecore/content/ULI2Home/ResearchAndPublications/PolicyPracticePriorityAreas/Infrastructure/~/_media/Documents/ResearchAndPublications/Reports/Infrastructure/Infrastructure2011.ashx

² *A Framework for Creating a Financially Stable Public Transportation System for Massachusetts*, available at http://www.northeastern.edu/dukakiscenter/focus_areas/transportation/blueribbonsummit/documents/BlueRibbon_Summit_Framework_final.pdf

³ *Transit Finance in Massachusetts: A Framework for Discussion*, available at <http://www.abettercity.org/docs/Transit%20Finance%20White%20Paper.pdf>

We have written to Senator Brown to correct his misinformation about the current state gas tax and to urge him to support current federal funding levels for state transportation spending; a copy of that letter is attached. We thank you for your commitment to investing in the transportation infrastructure that is so vital to the Commonwealth and hope that you will continue to keep an open mind about all potential revenue sources that can help to address decades of underinvestment in Massachusetts' transportation system.

Stephanie Pollack, Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy, Northeastern University* AND

Richard A. Dimino, A Better City*

Eugene B. Benson, Alternatives for Community and Environment*

Stephanie Wasser, Boston District Council/Urban Land Institute*

Melissa Hoffer, Conservation Law Foundation*

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Jeanne Dubois, Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corporation*

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