

Massachusetts Department of Transportation
Secretary's Report
Meeting of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation Board of
Directors
Lynn City Hall, 3 City Hall Square
Lynn, Massachusetts
May 14, 2014

Opening Remarks

As we all now know, on April 18, Governor Patrick signed the Transportation Bond Bill into law, which officially set into motion the next wave of investments and improvements to our transportation system.

Development of the plan, which began in 2012 when we traveled to each corner of the Commonwealth to engage all of our customers across all modes, was based on one familiar theme we kept hearing: people want *more* of our services, not less.

While the end result was not all we in the Administration had hoped for, it still will provide many of the benefits our customers are demanding.

Some of those are: replacing 45-year-old Red Line and 35-year-old Orange Line cars, with a requirement that they be assembled in Massachusetts; the resources to complete the extension of the Green Line into Somerville; bringing the very successful Silver Line to Chelsea, for a one-seat ride to Logan Airport, the Innovation District, or South Station. We'll also be making the largest capital investment in the state's history for the 15 Regional Transit Authorities, including new maintenance facilities in Worcester and Springfield, with new buses as well. As we are getting close to going "cash-less" on the Tobin Bridge, we will also take steps to fully implement all-electronic tolling for the length of the Turnpike and harbor tunnels. We will be able to fund several early-action projects to support South Coast Rail, and we will also be able to continue to rebuild and repair our roads and bridges.

Again, while this isn't everything we had been advocating for, the bill the Governor signed will result in the kinds of improvements that will directly benefit our customers. I look forward to realizing those improvements and I

want to thank all of our customers for helping us in the development of our plan, and for being such a strong voice advocating for our collective goals.

I also want to thank Lynn's Senator Tom McGee, the Senate Chair of the Transportation Committee, for his tremendous work to get this Transportation Bond Bill passed. Without Chairman McGee's diligent support, courage, and leadership, the final version of the Transportation Bond Bill would not have been nearly comprehensive enough to deliver on the major achievements we are now moving forward on.

So thank you again, Chairman McGee.

Second Annual Energy Expo

Yesterday, we had our second annual Energy Expo that brought together a wide range of policy makers and transportation experts with diverse backgrounds to explore the newest wave of renewable energy initiatives. While we continue to make reforms as an agency, our energy use and the use of new and emerging technologies must remain a top focus as part of those reforms. As the largest consumer of electricity in Massachusetts, each and every step we – at the T and DOT – take to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels has a major impact. I want to thank all of the participants who attended the Expo for sharing their new and innovative ideas, and I want to thank Assistant Secretary Shaw and his team for all their hard work and for making this year's Expo such a success.

GO Time Expansion

Also in the realm of innovation, on April 11, Governor Patrick announced the expansion of our popular real time traffic information system, now known as GO Time.

The system is now operational along Route 6 on the cape and we are in the process of expanding it to the I-91 corridor, Route 24, the full length of I-95, the full length of the Turnpike, and elsewhere by 2015.

The delivery of real time travel information is critical to our customers so they know what to expect, but more importantly, so they can make more informed decisions.

With our component smartphone app, RideWise, travel decisions can finally be made *in advance* and can help give back the one thing that is most important to us all: time.

37 Billion Mile Data Challenge

On a similar front, our 37 Billion Mile Data Challenge was a tremendous success that will most certainly have an impact on policy decisions moving forward.

Through a partnership with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, and our team here, the release of vehicle-use data allowed entrants to develop visualizations, applications, and insights to our transportation system and its uses.

As we continue our efforts to promote a sustainable transportation system, releasing data that can be put to a creative and actionable use will also help us gain a better understanding of our customers and their needs.

Bay State Bike Week

On the topic of sustainability, as we continue to encourage folks to think about using transit more, or walking or biking more, we are placing special emphasis on that this week.

As we enter the half-way point of Bay State Bike Week, I continue to encourage everyone to think about biking as a travel choice that is fun, healthy, safe, and sustainable.

A strong commitment to bicycle and pedestrian travel is a key part of MassDOT's vision. Traveling by a healthier mode transportation like walking or biking reduces congestion, improves air quality, and promotes healthy lifestyles.

I want to credit our team here at MassDOT, as well as MassRIDES, and MassBike for their hard work. Because of your efforts, MassDOT remains the only state DOT in the nation to organize and lead a statewide Bike Week celebration.

118th Boston Marathon

This year, as the cities and towns along the Marathon route looked to reclaim “Marathon Monday” after last year’s attacks, I’m proud to say that the MBTA and Transit Police helped to lead an effort to ensure the public’s safety that reached unprecedented levels of coordination and cooperation.

By working together with numerous law enforcement agencies, and our partners at the federal, state, and local levels, MBTA employees and Transit Police officers safely moved millions of spectators and athletes around the 118th Boston Marathon.

Despite last year’s attacks, the increase in the number of athletes and spectators was truly a testament to the significance the Marathon has to this city – and I could not be more proud of the role the T and Transit Police played to make this year’s race a safe and enjoyable event for everyone.

Project Selection Advisory Council

On April 29, the Project Selection Advisory Council met in Greenfield to discuss the development of proposed project evaluation criteria and metrics that will be used in the selection process.

The Council has focused on refining the evaluation criteria, which revolve around: safety and security, mobility and access, economic development, quality of life, impacts on public health and the environment, regional equity, and system preservation.

While we continue to make progress on the criteria, we will be seeking the public’s input at a hearing on May 20, at the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission in Pittsfield. If I haven’t said it enough, our greatest resource we rely on for direction and guidance is our customers. We hope you will attend and give us your feedback.

Green Line Extension Community Path

On April 30, I announced that MassDOT will be committing funding for the construction of a continuation of the Community Path in Somerville as part of the Green Line Extension project.

The 1.9-mile extension of the Community Path in Somerville will connect with four stations along the Green Line Extension: Lowell Street, Gilman Square, Washington Street, and the relocated Lechmere Station.

This is a critical link connecting to the Minuteman Bikeway, meaning path users will now have the ability to ride or walk on a designated path from Bedford to East Cambridge.

Combined with the GLX project, the path will include close to a thousand bicycle parking spaces at stations to enhance bike-to-transit intermodal connections, and will also create a stronger link between the planned Lowell Street Station with the Davis Square Station on the Red Line.

The path will be opened in phases, with the expectation that it will reach full buildout by 2020, when the Green Line Extension will also be complete.

Visit from US DOT Secretary Foxx

The same day we announced our commitment to extend the Community Path, we also were visited by the US Secretary of Transportation, Anthony Foxx, who was the bearer of potentially bad news.

The Federal Highway Trust Fund is facing a shortfall that could be insolvent by this coming August. Even with Congress's adoption of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act, the sources of revenue to keep up with the needs of the nation's roads, bridges, and transit systems are not adequate.

Sound familiar? That's because we just went through this same exercise here in Massachusetts to shore up our revenue streams and to develop a plan to finance our needs for maintenance, along with some strategic investments and expansions.

But there's no escaping the fact that we absolutely rely on federal funds to meet even our most basic needs. We are already asking our customers to pay more in tolls, fares, and RMV fees. We are also asking drivers to pay more for gas. But to go without federal funds would completely cripple our efforts to now show a return on the increased investment we are asking everyone to contribute to maintain what we have.

Recent media reports – including an editorial last Sunday in the Globe, and three recent articles in the Herald underscored the already well-documented backlog of maintenance needs.

This past Sunday's Globe had an editorial outlining the negative reaction to President Obama's plan to give states the option of expanding tolling to account for a revenue shortfall. And while the editorial portrayed the outcry against expanded tolling as bipartisan, it highlighted another bipartisan sentiment united against raising the federal gas tax – the principal source of revenue for the Trust Fund.

Likewise, the Herald published three reports estimating the Commonwealth's maintenance deficit at some \$12.2 billion, noting that even with its own sources, MassDOT and the MBTA cannot keep pace with its maintenance deficit without federal funding.

To use our Highway Division as an example, if federal funds were to stop, half of our Highway program would grind to a halt; we would stop advertising new federally funded projects, and we would be back before the public asking for more resources, knowing that even that would not be enough to overcome the loss of federal funds.

In light of the progress we in the Patrick Administration and the Legislature have just made to set our transportation system on a sustainable and responsible path, we need a resolution at the federal level. We need Congress to step up and to start thinking creatively and realistically.

On a final note, one of the Herald articles outlining the \$12.2 billion maintenance deficit also brought up the campaign to repeal the gas tax index.

The same story saying that we need \$12.2 billion included a statement from index repeal proponents. The statement was apparently suggesting that the gas tax be subject to a political vote each year to justify its need. While I am inclined to think an annual vote on a tax increase is unrealistic, it is also harmful in that it will not allow us to plan for the long term by removing the consistency we have with a fixed rate.

And while I continue to advocate for keeping the index, make no mistake, even if the repeal effort is successful, it will pale in comparison to the crisis we will face with no federal funds by August.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That concludes my remarks.