

North Shore Coalition

a local initiative facilitated by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council

Transportation Funding Principles for the North Shore Coalition

Adopted September 12, 2019

Funding Principles

For too long, the North Shore's transportation has been underfunded. Our region has been depending on a crumbling infrastructure that must be updated to enhance our residents' quality of life, the vitality of our businesses and educational institutions, and our natural and recreational treasures. The North Shore and its residents deserve a 21st century transportation system and it requires full funding in order for our communities to pursue both short-term and long-term actions. However, local governments do not receive (and are not allowed to raise) the funds needed to maintain local roads or improve existing infrastructure.

The North Shore Coalition strives for a transportation system with a diversity of travel modes (walking, cycling, transit, and automobile) that provides access and mobility to all. Residents, workers and visitors will have greater access to jobs, housing, educational opportunities, tourist and recreational destinations, and services without the need of a personal automobile. We believe the North Shore should have more options to avoid congestion on our roadways and transit system, and for the economic vitality of our region to be enhanced by a well-functioning transportation network.

The cities and towns we represent cannot wait decades for a gradual effort to address the serious maintenance needs now facing our roads and rails. Furthermore, our growing economy demands that we improve and expand our transit system to accommodate our growing population and job base, meet the needs of transit-dependent residents, and address the effects of climate change.

We are encouraged to see legislative leaders and Governor Baker pursuing ways to fund our transportation system more fully, but we ask all parties to give our transportation needs the urgent attention they deserve.

We believe that legislation designed to address transportation should, at a minimum, address the following:

- **Geographic Diversity:** The 18 cities and towns in the North Shore are urban, suburban and rural, and require varied solutions to meet the access and mobility needs of all the residents who live here.

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- **Natural and Human Environment:** Transportation investments and policies must prioritize reducing greenhouse gases emissions and be resilient to the effects of climate change. Public transit, walking, cycling and other non-automobile travel modes will have precedence in our public streets and spaces. We should prioritize those investments that reduce greenhouse gas emissions by reducing single-occupancy vehicle use and vehicle miles traveled.
- **Economic Development:** Local transportation and housing investments should prioritize not just moving traffic, but focus on connecting workers, employers, students and tourists in our region to foster economic growth.
- **Mobility & Efficiency:** Transportation investment decisions should take the “people-first” approach outlined in the Governor’s Commission on the Future of Transportation, prioritizing human mobility over the movement of cars and ensuring that more people can take public transit, bike and walk to get around our region. Residents, workers and visitors in the North Shore should have more reliable access to their destinations in and around the entire Metro region. We must also find innovative ways of using existing resources to help meet mobility and access needs.
- **Equity:** Seniors, persons with disabilities, low-income people, youth, and households without automobiles require greater affordable access to places to expand their opportunities and to meet their daily needs. Changes in our transportation system should not place disproportionate impacts on vulnerable and disadvantaged populations.

These efforts will only be successful if additional resources are made available at the local and state level, and if municipalities have a say in how our transportation dollars are invested.

These funding options should be immediately enacted:

Gas tax and other vehicle fees. The gas tax in Massachusetts was last raised by 3-cents in 2013. Compared to the other New England states, our gas tax is relatively low,¹ and it has not kept pace with the rising cost of our transportation

¹ According to the [Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy](#), these are the current gas tax rates in our neighboring states: Maine: \$0.30; New Hampshire: \$0.24; Vermont: \$0.31; Connecticut: \$0.37; Rhode Island: \$0.34; New York: \$0.45

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needs. We should increase the gas tax by at least 15 cents, which would raise roughly \$450 million a year. Our registration and inspection fees are well below the national average and should also be increased to keep pace with other states, and put on a regular schedule for modest and predictable increases.

Transportation & Climate Initiative. Over one third of the Commonwealth's overall emissions come from the transportation sector, and we must take immediate steps to reduce our transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions. The Transportation Climate Initiative (TCI) is a collaboration of Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states and the District of Columbia, which are working on a regional effort to cap, reduce, and charge a fee for carbon emissions from the combustion of transportation fuels, with proceeds invested in programs that enhance low-carbon transportation options and more resilient transportation infrastructure. Capping emissions at the wholesale level would generate millions of new transportation dollars, while helping Massachusetts to cut emissions and to comply with the goals adopted in the Global Warming Solutions Act.

Increased surcharges for Transportation Network Companies. While Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) like Uber and Lyft provide an important service, they also contribute directly to congestion in our communities by creating new car trips that would have otherwise been taken by transit, biking or walking. This increase in congestion also directly increases greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector, moving us in the wrong direction.² To curb congestion caused by TNCs, we need to encourage more people to take shared rides. We should increase the TNC fee so that it is more on par with other major metropolitan areas. A fee structure that gives an advantage to shared trips over single occupancy trips can serve to encourage shared rides.

We should empower cities and towns to play a greater role in local transportation investment decisions:

Municipal revenue-raising tools. In most other areas of the country, cities and towns are authorized to raise revenue to invest in local transportation priorities. Many of these tools are not currently available in Massachusetts. Regional ballot initiatives, value capture tools, private parking taxation, and special assessment and transportation improvement districts are all local revenue options that

² In 2018, TNCs added 0.5 percent to the total carbon emissions across Massachusetts.
<https://www.mapc.org/resource-library/the-growing-carbon-footprint-of-ride-hailing-in-massachusetts/>

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should be available to cities and towns. Though local revenue-raising options will not on their own raise enough money for transformative transportation improvements, local dollars can act as a down payment on larger transportation projects, help municipalities to address local needs, and give residents a greater say in addressing local transportation challenges.

We should continue to look at other ways to encourage mode shift, moving more people out of their cars and onto transit:

Expanded tolling to other highways. Today, we unfairly toll one highway (the Mass Pike), one bridge (the Tobin), and two tunnels (the Sumner and the Ted Williams), while allowing the drivers on all other roads to travel for free. Yet the Commonwealth must maintain all highways equally. Therefore, tolling should be introduced on other limited access highways across the Commonwealth. Massachusetts should work closely with the Federal Highway Administration to gain approval for increased tolling and should ensure that toll revenue can be spent on a broad list of infrastructure investments, including transit improvements, since transit draws riders off the roads and reduces congestion. We should explore programs that aim to reduce congestion and encourage mode shift on our busiest corridors, including innovative tolling strategies to increase transit use in the same corridors. To avoid placing a disproportionate burden on low-income populations, we should incorporate exemptions for low-income commuters.

The North Shore Coalition believes that legislation crafted in accordance with these principles and funding priorities will benefit not only the North Shore, but the entire Commonwealth. Now is the time to address our existing transportation needs, to make our transportation system more resilient to climate change, and to make investments that will prepare our economy to compete far into the future.