

July 28, 2020

Representative William M. Straus
State House, Room 134
Boston, MA 02133

Senator Joseph A. Boncore
State House, Room 112
Boston, MA 02133

Representative Mark J. Cusack
State House, Room 34
Boston, MA 02133

Senator Michael J. Rodrigues
State House, Room 212
Boston, MA 02133

Representative Norman J. Orrall
State House, Room 540
Boston, MA 02133

Senator Dean A. Tran
State House, Room 504
Boston, MA 02133

Re: Comments regarding S.2836/H.4547, *An Act authorizing and accelerating transportation investment*

Dear Conference Committee Members;

On behalf of our municipalities, thank you for keeping transportation policy top of mind this session. Local and regional transportation solutions are critical to ensuring an equitable economic recovery, and we appreciate all of the work the legislature has done thus far to make progress toward a safe, reliable, and affordable transportation system.

S.2836/H.4547, *An Act authorizing and accelerating transportation investment*, currently includes a number of programs that would be greatly beneficial to cities and towns, including authorizations that would fund the Complete Streets program and provide municipal grants to expand transit access and improve bus service.

We are writing today to express our support for the Regional Ballot Initiatives proposal, included in S.2836, and the Value Capture proposal included in H.4547. These two provisions would give cities and towns the opportunity to invest local money in local and regional transportation priorities. For municipal governments to be empowered to contribute to sustainable, long-term improvements to our transportation system, all resources that would help us invest in our communities need to be on the table. Therefore, **we are asking you to adopt both provisions in the final bill.**

Local and regional transportation investments will play an important role to foster economic revitalization and recovery. Regional ballot initiatives and value capture tools give cities and towns the opportunity to control their own transportation destiny. These investments will help create jobs and promote greater access to Main Streets for employees and consumers alike. Though local revenue-raising options will not on their own raise enough money for transformative

transportation improvements, these 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 transportation challenges. When Congress passed the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)* in 2009, they did not require a local contribution in order for states to receive funding. But in the years since ARRA, there has been bipartisan support for infrastructure investments that favor those communities and regions that can make local contributions. We need to create these local tools now so that we are better able to take advantage of any potential federal stimulus funds.

Our coalitions have all taken positions in strong support of increased revenue for transportation, which could be accomplished by raising taxes and fees to invest in transportation. We recognize that these provisions are not germane to the Conference Committee, but offer our continued support of them here.

Massachusetts is one of nine states in the country that does not allow cities and towns to raise money locally to invest in local projects. The two tools before you are predicated on different on-the-ground situations. Value Capture assumes that an investment is already being made by a developer, while Regional Ballot Initiatives work more like the Community Preservation Act, allowing a local option for cities and towns to raise local money for specific investments. By enabling cross-municipal collaboration, Regional Ballot Initiatives also offer the additional flexibility of allowing less affluent communities to partner with wealthier communities to unlock projects that otherwise would take much longer to construct, if they are advanced at all.

From improving commuter rail and RTA service, to expanding walking and biking infrastructure and rail trail networks, taken together, these local tools will help communities across the Commonwealth build a transportation system that serves all of our residents.

As we continue to invest in safe, well-connected transportation infrastructure, we are also supportive of helping our residents to get around using new mobility options, such as electric bicycles and scooters. We are supportive of the provision that was included in the Senate bill that would expand the micromobility options that we can use in our Commonwealth. We encourage the Conference Committee not to adopt provisions that would make it harder for companies to offer e-bike and scooter options in our communities.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. We look forward to our continued partnership and are very grateful for your work on these immense challenges thus far.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Lizzi Weyant, Director of Government Affairs at the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, at eweyant@mapc.org or 540-809-4467.

Sincerely,



Joseph Curtatone
Mayor of Somerville
Chair, Metro Mayors Coalition



Kimberley Driscoll
Mayor of Salem
Chair, North Shore Coalition



Thomas M. McGee
Mayor of Lynn
Co-Chair, Commuter Rail Communities
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