



July 22, 2021

Senator Joseph A. Boncore  
Chair, Joint Committee on Transportation  
State House, Room 112  
Boston, MA 02133

Representative William M. Strauss  
Chair, Joint Committee on Transportation  
State House, Room 134  
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chairman Boncore and Chairman Strauss,

I am writing to support provisions included in *S. 2265 An Act creating a New Deal for Transportation in the Commonwealth*. This bill restores two provisions adopted by the Legislature in last session's transportation bond bill but were later vetoed by Governor Baker. The vetoes of the special commission on roadway and congestion pricing and the expansion of transportation network company (TNC) fees strip the state of powerful mechanisms to study, plan for, finance, and manage mobility once post-pandemic travel patterns take shape.

This bill wisely lengthens the term of the special commission, with a final recommendation filed with the Legislature no later than January 1, 2023. We have already seen congestion return to pre-pandemic levels despite many continuing to work remotely, underscoring the need for a commission to review how we use and price transportation. While we do not yet fully understand what commuting will look like in a post-COVID world, we should be preparing the tools necessary to create and manage a 21<sup>st</sup> century transportation system.

In his veto earlier this year, Governor Baker commented that the impact of a congestion commission would be unduly borne by low-income commuters. This comment anticipates an outcome from the commission, despite no such outcome being guaranteed. Furthermore, the burden of funding transportation in Massachusetts is already unduly borne by transit riders, many of whom are low-income residents. Over the last 30 years [MBTA fares have increased](#) over 180 percent despite the gas tax increasing by only 14 percent. And, western Massachusetts and Metrowest residents are well aware of the inequity of tolls on I-90 while other parts of the state have no tolls. The commission could both address existing inequities and integrate equity into future planning.

One additional tool is changing the structure for fees on TNC trips. While commuting patterns will change to a degree, TNCs will continue to draw riders away from public transit and contribute to congestion, especially in urban areas. The state should structure these fees to incentivize shared transportation and distribute the revenue to invest in regional transportation authorities across the state. The Chamber also strongly supports an additional surcharge on luxury rides, which introduces a greater degree of equity to our transportation funding mechanisms.

The Chamber looks forward to continuing to work with the Legislature in addressing our state's transportation needs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'James E. Rooney'.

James E. Rooney  
President and CEO

CC: Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation