



March 23, 2009

Dear Chairman Baddour and Chairman Wagner:

Massachusetts needs a safe, efficient, and environmentally sound transportation system. To achieve the transportation network we need, both reforms and new revenues are necessary. The undersigned organizations are united in support of a **29-cent gas tax increase** as a centerpiece of a transportation reform and funding effort.

We recognize that it is difficult to ask people to pay more for the transportation system in these difficult economic times. But the cost of inaction will be far greater for Massachusetts' residents. Investment in our transportation system through a gas tax increase will create jobs, build and maintain the strong system we need to support our economy, and provide vital improved mobility. If we don't generate revenues through a gas tax, spreading the cost of our transportation system broadly, state transportation agencies will be forced to pursue less equitable measures -- including transit fare hikes and service cuts -- to meet funding gaps. Meanwhile, our roads and bridges will continue to crumble, and a few segments of the state will be hit with enormous toll increases. We urge you to take responsible action now to avoid fare hikes, service cuts and other measures which will disproportionately burden low-income residents, decrease mobility, and undercut the environmental goals of reducing pollution and curtailing climate change.

We are particularly concerned that adequate funding be allocated to public transportation across the state. The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) and Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) provide essential service. These systems help reduce congestion on our crowded roadways. The MBTA and RTAs are also some of our best tools to combat climate change and air pollution. The transportation sector is the largest and fastest growing source of greenhouse gas emissions in Massachusetts. One of the best ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is to provide attractive alternatives to travel other than by private automobile. A gas tax increase that includes funding to maintain, improve and expand transit service across Massachusetts is sound environmental policy and economic policy. Effects of a gas tax increase on low-income residents can be mitigated through a tax rebate or other similar measure. Allowing our transit systems to decay, transit fares to increase and transit service to be cut is irresponsible—for the health of our planet and our residents.

A 29-cent gas tax increase will enable the Commonwealth to provide the 21st century transportation system Massachusetts' residents need and deserve. We urge you to take this opportunity to demonstrate leadership by providing a truly comprehensive solution to Massachusetts' transportation problems that will result in an equitable, affordable, accessible, and environmentally-sound transportation system.

Sincerely,

Kalila Barnett, Executive Director
Alternatives for Community and Environment

Cindy Luppi, New England Co-Director
Clean Water Action

Carrie Russell, Staff Attorney
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George Bachrach, President
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Christopher Hart, Director of Urban and Transit Projects
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Jacqueline Y. Douglas, Transportation Advocate
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Rob Garrity, Executive Director
Massachusetts Climate Action Network

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Massachusetts League of Environmental Voters
Eric Bourassa, Consumer Advocate
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Massachusetts Sierra Club

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