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Massachusetts Municipal Association Endorses Governor's MBTA Reform Bill
MMA Calls for Passage of Strong MBTA Reform Legislation & Continued Funding for Transportation

Boston, MA, June 9, 2015 – The Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) today announced its support for Governor Charlie Baker's MBTA reform legislation. At a morning meeting of the MMA Board of Directors, local officials from across the state voted to embrace core elements of Governor Baker's reform bill, including establishing a strong fiscal and management control board, exempting the MBTA from the Pacheco anti-outsourcing law, and enacting safeguards to make sure that future arbitration awards are affordable for MBTA riders and taxpayers.

"Fixing the MBTA is not a narrow regional issue; half of the communities in Massachusetts belong to the district and pay assessments to fund the MBTA's operations, and the MBTA plays an essential role in the economy for an overwhelming number of our cities and towns," said Orleans Selectman and MMA President David Dunford. "Getting the MBTA back on track is a top priority for virtually everyone, and the Baker-Polito MBTA reform bill provides us with a unique opportunity to improve the MBTA's finances, management and operations, and build the first-class system that taxpayers deserve," Dunford said.

"The winter of 2015 was a low point for the MBTA, but the Governor's reform bill provides us with an opportunity to turn problems into progress," said Haverhill Mayor James Fiorentini, the President of the Massachusetts Mayors Association and the member of the MMA Board who made the motion to support the Governor's bill. "On behalf of communities across the state, we respectfully urge our legislators to embrace the reforms that will build a stronger future for public transportation and a stronger economy for Massachusetts," he concluded.

"This past winter revealed extraordinary weaknesses in the MBTA's ability to perform, and major changes are necessary to improve service and ensure the kind of accountability to riders and taxpayers that is necessary," said MMA Executive Director Geoff Beckwith. "The MMA is calling for passage of the Governor's reform bill because tinkering around the edges will not be enough."

In addition to endorsing the MBTA reform bill, the MMA Board of Directors is also calling for the state to continue contract assistance funding to the MBTA consistent with the levels committed to in the 2013 transportation finance law enacted by the Legislature. "Reducing state funding for the MBTA before all of the reforms are implemented would prolong the agency's fiscal problems," said Beckwith. Further, the MMA is calling for a careful review of any future fare adjustments to ensure that they are affordable for riders and all those who depend on public transportation.

The major reforms that the MMA is urging the Legislature to adopt include the following:

• Passage of a strong Fiscal and Management Control Board and the appointment of a Chief Administrator for the MBTA;

• Exempting the MBTA from the Pacheco Law governing contracting for services;

• Requiring the Control Board to approve future arbitration awards, and prohibiting retroactive awards;

• Allowing alternative construction methods, including construction management at-risk and design-build procurement;

• Extending the public records law to the MBTA retirement fund and implementing an independent audit of the T's retirement system; and

• Expanding MassDOT's Board of Directors to include municipal government experience.

The Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) is the statewide nonprofit, nonpartisan association that provides advocacy, training, publications, research and other services to Massachusetts cities and towns. The MMA is the only statewide organization that brings municipal officials together to establish unified policies, to advocate these policies, and to ensure the effective delivery of services to community residents.

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