



January 25, 2016

Secretary Stephanie Pollack
Massachusetts Department of Transportation
10 Park Plaza, Suite 4160
Boston, MA 02116

Re: Capital Conversations Comment Submission

Dear Secretary Pollack:

I want to thank you for the opportunity to voice our opinions and speak with your staff at the Capital Conversations event in Leominster on October 21, 2015. The North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce represents over 1,000 business firms in North Central Massachusetts, all of whom recognize the importance of investments in transportation.

As we think about transportation in North Central Massachusetts, our focus relies heavily on improving access through regional spending equity. We hope that you and your team thoughtfully approach investments so that transportation improvements are allocated for all parts of the Commonwealth – not just the Greater Boston area.

For your consideration, we offer the following comments on transportation related investments that we think would be of great value to the economy of North Central Massachusetts and the entire Commonwealth. For your convenience, I have organized our comments by topic.

Railroad

- The Fitchburg Commuter rail line improvement project has been an important step to providing commuters in the North Central Massachusetts region access to reliable and safe transportation throughout the region and into Boston. The infrastructure improvements are an important part of this conversation – but we believe that travel time and frequency of service should be considered the next critical dialogue. Extending the inbound mid-morning Littleton trains to Fitchburg will improve access for the region's commuters. To provide the greatest impact, we urge that travel time from the Fitchburg to Boston North Station be reduced by expanding express trains. Providing full service throughout the day and expanding express trains to the region will also encourage the use of the commuter rail as a viable commuting option. This should include adjusting the train schedules so those taking advantage of the reverse commute can arrive in Fitchburg before 8:00 am.
- The Wachusett Station construction is an exciting step in improving access to the region's vast tourism and educational destinations. Creating accommodating schedules for both inbound and outbound trains at this stop will tremendously improve access to the

region and help support our growing tourism economy by connecting Boston to the many attractions that the region has to offer. We encourage the continuation of full weekend and evening service be considered for residents and visitors.

Highway

- North Central Massachusetts is home to more manufacturers than any other region in the Commonwealth. These critical industries need the roadway and infrastructure support in order to meet materials needs and product transportation within the region. Improving the Route 2 corridor roadways and bridges so that they are sustainable arteries for our manufacturers will be important in ensuring that these businesses stay in Massachusetts as they grow.
- Over 20 years ago, initial plans were developed for construction of a North Leominster Bypass and Fitchburg Connector to Route 2. These plans were ultimately put on hold as the state and federal governments took a “fix it first” approach to projects, which favored improving capacity to existing roads rather than new construction. We believe that in order to maximize economic success we need to take on these initiatives so that we can connect travelers to the communities more efficiently. Route 2 access to Fitchburg is limited, and we need these projects to support access to the city.
- MassDOT has prepared reviews and environmental impact studies of the traffic signal at Mt. Elam Road and Route 2. We encourage revisiting this issue to help alleviate the traffic concerns and congestion abutting the intersection.
- We encourage MassDOT to continue to support the Route 2 Visitor’s Center in Lancaster. The partnership between MassDOT and the Johnny Appleseed Trail Association has generated a tremendous impact of tourism in our region – with over 165,000 visitors a year. Tourism in this region has played an important part of our economy, and we look forward to your continued support.

Aeronautics

- Continued support and investment in the Fitchburg Municipal Airport will continue to provide opportunities for growth in the region. We appreciate the investments and support that MassDOT has provided for the airport.
- The airport’s potential needs to be continuously stressed so that we can maximize the economic impact of the airport. Through partnerships with MassDOT, we believe that Fitchburg Municipal Airport can significantly strengthen the economy of North Central Massachusetts. Through continued investments and collaboration, the airport can reach its potential as a source of growth and vitality for the region.

Regional Transportation

- There are currently no MassDOT Park and Ride locations in North Central Massachusetts, providing little alternative for commuters. Expanding the park and ride opportunities along Route 2 has the potential to decrease traffic, improve environmental impact and take the stress off of a hectic commute.
- Providing funding to expand regional bus service, commuter services and other regional transportation efforts will always be an important piece in improving the region’s

economy. We always appreciate your support of the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority.

- MassDOT should consider reviewing coverage gaps within the regional transit networks. We hear from employers and communities that are unsure of what regional authorities service those areas that might fall in between service networks – so a review of those networks and their coverage gaps would be a tremendous service to those who rely on public transportation in North Central Massachusetts.

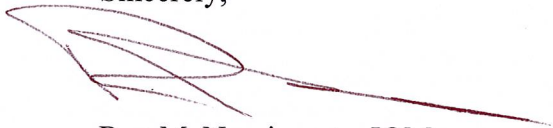
Registry of Motor Vehicles

- Retaining a brick-and-mortar Registry location is important to the many businesses and residents in the region. We look forward to your expansion of the services in the region and offering innovative solutions to many issues that have been presented with the Registry over the last several years.

Thank you for this opportunity to have a voice in the Commonwealth's investments in transportation and infrastructure improvements. Please let us know how we can be a resource for your department.

If you have any further questions, or would like to discuss this further do not hesitate to contact us at (978) 353-7600.

Sincerely,



Roy M. Nascimento, IOM
President and CEO



Patrick Lawlor
Public Affairs Manager

cc: North Central Massachusetts Legislative Delegation
Mayor Stephen DiNatale
Mayor Dean Mazzaella
Mayor Mark Hawke

