

Office of Representative Carolyn C. Dykema

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Leah Robins, Legislative Aide
Office of Representative Carolyn Dykema
[\(617\) 722-2210](tel:6177222210)
leah.robins@state.ma.us

Dykema Supports Transportation Finance Legislation, Opposes Small Business Tax

Dear Residents of the 8th Middlesex District,

Last night, on behalf of our district, I voted to support transportation finance legislation that will increase funding to our towns for road repair and address concerns about state reliance on debt. Despite support for the plan by many business groups, my vote in favor of the plan was not easy; it required supporting a 3 cent per gallon gas tax increase and additional taxes on tobacco and commercial interests that will affect residents and local businesses in all of our towns.

Many of you took the time to contact my office to express your opinion on the bill's provisions. I appreciate this opportunity to address your concerns and explain why I believe this legislation is in the best interest of our district.

More Stable Transportation Budgeting and Funding

In 2007, a bipartisan commission issued a [report](#) raising serious concerns about the state of our transportation system – the safety and condition of our roads and bridges as well as the debt on our public transit systems. Six years later, we can no longer delay addressing these concerns which have implications for public safety, our quality of life, and stable budgeting. Our employers also need reassurance that we are committed to a robust public transit system that will keep us competitive with other states for top labor talent.

It's important to understand the reason we're at this point: current fiscal practices, many related to the "Big Dig," are unsustainable. The most significant of these practices is the inappropriate use of debt to pay for everyday expenses. In our homes, this would be like taking out a loan to pay for groceries. This is a practice that MassDOT has been using for years as a result of inadequate funding, and which will end as a result of this legislation. While I realize paying more won't be easy for any of our residents, I believe that most understand that stable finances and investing in our roads, bridges and public transportation is vital for public safety and for accommodating economic growth that will leave us all better off in the long run.

During the debate, I'm pleased that the House adopted my amendment requiring MassDOT to compare performance of our transit system not only with our own past performance, but with other states and countries, as well. Massachusetts is a world class hub and deserves a transportation system that keeps us there.

More Funding for Local Roads

The legislation I supported last night significantly increases the funding every town will receive for upgrading our local roads. For our district, this means hundreds of thousands of additional dollars for road and sidewalk maintenance. With many harsh winters and tight state budgets, the maintenance of our roads and sidewalks has suffered. This legislation will allow us to address these concerns that affect our quality of life and safety.

Progress on Toll Equity

I'm pleased to say that last night we took an important step toward addressing the unfair impacts of tolling on commuters from our region. Because we are one of the few areas of the state subject to tolling, MetroWest commuters have long been paying more than our fair share. As a result of this legislation, any future conversations relative to increasing the burden on toll payers will require additional due diligence by MassDOT. The legislation also requires the completion of an implementation plan for equitable statewide tolling, that includes open road tolls. These are modest, but important, steps forward for our region.

I want you to know that my colleagues and I in the MetroWest legislative caucus also fought for a provision to freeze the tolls currently in place. While not successful, we will continue to make all our colleagues and the Governor aware of the need to address the unfair toll burden we bear.

Small Business Impacts

One of the concerns I always consider is impacts on our small businesses. A provision in the bill that taxes software development services raised concerns with many small businesses that operate in this industry. Despite my opposition, and that of [53 other House members](#) in both parties, the provision was included in the final bill. I remain hopeful that these concerns can be addressed when the bill moves to the Senate.

Education

Many of you contacted my office to ask for my support of a much larger tax plan proposed by the Governor. The Governor's plan included funding for education in addition to a greater investment in transportation. As a parent of children in the public schools, I strongly agree with the Governor that education investments are crucial to our economic future. However, I don't believe it's fiscally prudent to support a larger increase that could jeopardize our still fragile economy. Further, I'm hopeful that as the economy continues to improve, growth will provide additional revenues for these badly needed education investments.

Again, thanks to all who shared your thoughts with me over the past months. Your perspectives varied widely, but you all shared a commitment to the well-being of our Commonwealth and its future. In reaching my decision to support this legislation, I attempted to balance all of your perspectives and suggestions. If you have questions or concerns you'd like to discuss this legislation in greater detail, I'd welcome the opportunity to speak with you personally.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Dykema