Massachusetts’ transportation systems are at a crisis point.

Greater Boston faces the worst traffic congestion in the country.\(^1\) The MBTA recently voted to increase fares once again, placing more of a burden on transit riders who are paying more even as the system is plagued by delays, overcrowding, and safety problems. In other regions of the state outside Greater Boston, access to public transportation options is limited, roads and highways are decaying, and nearly 500 bridges in Massachusetts are structurally deficient.\(^2\) None of the state's 15 Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) can afford to provide late-night service, and many stop running after 6:30 p.m. and/or do not provide service on Sundays or on weekends.\(^3\)

A recent report by an independent Safety Review Panel, which was commissioned by the MBTA’s Fiscal and Management Control Board, found that years of budget and staff cuts have contributed to safety concerns throughout the MBTA. Among other things, the panel found that “deep budget reductions have resulted in the lack of resources in critical areas, which may be affecting the safe delivery of services.”\(^4\) If we continue to delay making major investments in our transportation systems, these problems will only get more dangerous and more expensive to solve in the future.

Because of the failures of our transportation systems, many working families in Massachusetts are struggling with lengthy commutes, high transportation costs, and a lack of opportunity. High fares, unsafe operations, inadequate service, overcrowding, and equipment failures make it risky and uncomfortable to use our buses, trains and paratransit. Communities of color and lower-income residents—who disproportionately rely on public transportation to meet their basic needs\(^5\)—bear the brunt of the problems.
As community, faith, environmental, and labor groups, we share a vision: that our transportation systems across the state should help support working families and lower-income people, not operate as a barrier to opportunity. For Massachusetts to support all of our residents and communities, and to compete against other regions around the nation and the globe, we need to invest in modern, reliable transportation: safer roads and bridges, public transportation that works, and safe ways to walk and bike.

In order to get there, there is nearly universal acknowledgment that Massachusetts needs significant new revenue for transportation. A February report by the Boston-area business group A Better City projected an $8.4 billion shortfall in statewide transportation funding over the next decade.6 The Transportation Table, a group of business, industry, municipal, and non-profit leaders, recently called for $545-750 million in additional annual transportation investment over the next five years.7

The MBTA safety report reaffirmed the need for major infrastructure investments in the T, but also made it clear that those investments cannot come at the expense of the T’s operating budget. The MBTA clearly needs transformative investments in personnel and staffing in order to make up for years of budget cuts, and to accelerate the necessary infrastructure investments while still ensuring the safety of T riders and workers.

But in recent years, the only group that has done more to pay for our transportation systems is public transit riders. MBTA fares have increased four times since January 2012, with the price of a subway ride on a Charlie Card rising from $1.70 to $2.40 (a 41% increase), and the price of a bus trip on a Charlie Card rising from $1.25 to $1.70 (a 36% increase). RTA riders are paying more for less service, after years of inadequate funding from the state forced RTAs to repeatedly raise fares and cut service.

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**How Corporations Benefit from Our Transportation Systems**

Drivers, pedestrians, public transit riders, and cyclists aren’t the only users of our transportation systems. Large, profitable corporations move their goods on our publicly-funded roads and bridges and bring their employees to work on our public transportation systems.

Massachusetts corporations clearly recognize this benefit. The Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce says that members “constantly point to transportation – improving commutes, reducing congestion, and having a world class public transportation system – as their top policy priority, and that “more investment is needed.”8 A group of business organizations led by the Kendall Square Association says “we all use and benefit from” public transportation and that “we should all invest in its repair and expansion.”9

We strongly agree, and that means that large, profitable corporations, which benefit greatly from a reliable transportation system, have a shared responsibility to help fund continued investments in transportation.