

Bill authorizing \$100 million for New Bedford-Fairhaven bridge replacement heads to Gov. Baker's desk

Rep. Bill Straus (D-Mattapoissett) announced that the House of Representatives voted to approve the conference report for a \$11.4 billion transportation and infrastructure bond bill. Rep. Straus, who serves as House chair of the Joint Committee on Transportation, led the conference committee tasked with reconciling language differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill. The legislation is intended to authorize state expenditure of federal transportation dollars received under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law signed by President Biden last November. It also authorizes additional state borrowing in support of municipal road improvement programs, electric vehicle charging infrastructure, and \$400 million for safety improvement projects at the MBTA.

Several amendments sponsored by Rep. Straus during initial debate were adopted and included in the conference report, including an amendment authorizing the borrowing of \$100 million for the permitting and construction of the New Bedford-Fairhaven bridge and the reauthorization of a \$25 million earmark for the New Bedford Regional Airport that had previously been included in a 2014 borrowing bill. Rep. Straus also secured \$900,000 in debt authorization for emergency extraction equipment for local public safety departments that will serve South Coast Rail; another \$125,000 is included in the legislation for restoring into use the freight rail spur on New Bedford State Pier.

The bill also includes \$1,000,000 for road improvements along Bridge Street in Fairhaven; \$2,000,000 for improvements to

culverts on Mary's Pond Road in Rochester; and \$25,000 for a traffic survey for Acushnet.

Additionally, the legislation provides much needed resources for decarbonizing the commonwealth's transportation sector, currently the state's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions. \$175 million is dedicated to building out electric vehicle charging infrastructure; among those funds, \$50 million is dedicated to the MassEVIP Direct Current Fast Charging program with half of that amount dedicated to the commonwealth's Regional Transit Authorities to support the transition to electric public transit. \$50 million is dedicated to creating incentive programs to encourage the adoption of electric vehicles of all types, including school buses, freight trucks, and electric bicycles. A substantial amount of funding is provided for the electrification of the Commuter Rail system, with language requiring the MBTA to create and implement plans for the full electrification of each branch of the commuter rail.

"With the acceptance of the conference report, the House, once again, affirmed its dedication to meeting the transportation and infrastructure needs of our local cities and towns," said Rep. Straus. "This generational opportunity provides needed investments toward a more unified and resilient transportation system."

The bill now moves on to the Governor for his consideration.