

New Bedford Health Department provides information on 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The New Bedford Health Department has posted helpful information on its website regarding the 2019 Novel Coronavirus, or COVID-19. The page is available on the City's home page, www.newbedford-ma.gov, or on the Health Department's page on the City website, under 'News.' The page will continue to be updated and the City and Health Department will provide more information to share any updates with the public.

Information and important links, including to the federal Center for Disease Control and Massachusetts Department of Public Health websites regarding the virus, are available on the City's page. Information on the 2019 Novel Coronavirus is available [online at hwww.newbedford-ma.gov/health-department/coronavirus/](http://www.newbedford-ma.gov/health-department/coronavirus/).

Recently, the 2019 Novel Coronavirus, first detected in China, began spreading to other parts of the world. This virus causes a disease called COVID-19, which can lead to fever, cough and shortness of breath. There are now thousands of confirmed cases internationally, and the virus has begun to spread in the U.S., including a confirmed case of the virus in Massachusetts.

Anyone experiencing symptoms listed below, and has traveled to areas of concern, or has been in contact with someone who has traveled to these areas, should contact their healthcare provider before seeking treatment in person.

This situation will continue to be updated, including on this site and the Center for Disease Control's website regarding the 2019 Coronavirus, which is regularly updated. The

Massachusetts Department of Public Health website also includes information about the virus.

Prevention

The New Bedford Health Department recommends the following steps to prevent the spread of the virus, as well as other viruses:

- Wash your hands often, using soap and warm water, for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your face, eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- If you are feeling sick, stay home.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, and then throw the tissue in the trash. Cough or sneeze into your sleeve rather than into your hands.
- Clean and disinfect touched objects and surfaces frequently.

Symptoms

The 2019 Novel Coronavirus is a respiratory virus that may cause mild to severe respiratory symptoms including:

- Cough
- Fever
- Trouble breathing/shortness of breath
- Pneumonia (fluid in the lungs) in severe cases

Call ahead to a healthcare provider if you develop these symptoms and have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19, or if you live in or have recently traveled to an area with an ongoing spread of the virus. Tell your healthcare provider about your recent travel and/or contact with those who may have been traveling over the past 2-14 days.

For recent international travelers to areas of concern:

If you traveled recently to areas of concern and have symptoms including fever, cough, or trouble breathing:

- Seek medical care right away. Call your healthcare provider first to tell them about your travel and symptoms.
- Avoid contact with others. Stay home, except to seek medical care.
- Avoid further travel.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, and throw the tissue in the trash.
- Practice good coughing etiquette. Cough or sneeze into your sleeve, tissue and/or handkerchief and not your hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) if soap and water are unavailable.

Important Links

- [Center for Disease Control COVID-19 Information](#)
 - [Massachusetts Department of Public Health COVID-19 Information](#)
 - [COVID-19 Facts](#)
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Gas Tax, Toll Changes Among Massachusetts Transportation Tax Bill Amendments

By Chris Lisinski, State House News Service

State representatives are seeking a significant overhaul of Democratic leadership's landmark transportation-related tax and spending package that the House will debate this week.

In dozens of amendments, rank-and-file Democrats called for expanding the gasoline and diesel tax increases proposed by leaders, expanding road tolls to the state's borders and funding free public transportation. Republicans will seek to scrap tax hikes or at least sunset them once a potential income surtax takes effect.

The House will begin the process by taking up a multi-pronged tax bill (H 4508) on Wednesday. The legislation, unveiled by House Speaker Robert DeLeo and his top deputies last week, seeks to raise \$522 million to \$612 million per year through a 5-cent gasoline tax increase, a 9-cent diesel tax increase, a tiered increase to the corporate minimum excise tax, higher fees on ride-hailing services, and application of the state sales tax to vehicle purchases by rental car companies.

One amendment, filed by Brookline Democrat Rep. Tommy Vitolo and backed by the coalition Transportation for Massachusetts, would supplement the proposed fuel tax increases with additional future hikes.

Under Vitolo's amendment, both the gas tax and diesel tax would each increase another 5 cents in 2022 and a third five-cent increase in 2024 until they reach 39 cents per gallon and 43 cents per gallon, respectively. The amendment also increases the Earned Income Tax Credit to offset the impact of gas tax increases on low-income workers.

Other amendments would subject Suffolk and Middlesex Counties to a "higher tier" – without specifying numbers – of gas taxes, or would allow cities and towns to impose an additional 3-cent excise tax on fuel sales to retail dealers.

Republican lawmakers are poised to challenge the tax hikes sought by the Democrats who wield a supermajority. Gov. Charlie Baker has threatened to veto a gas tax increase in the past, and last week outlined his opposition to that proposal and the corporate minimum increase.

House Minority Leader Brad Jones filed amendments lessening the ride-hailing fee increases on shared and non-luxury trips and repealing the rental car sales tax application, while Rep. Elizabeth Poirier will seek elimination of the corporate minimum tax expansion.

Jones criticized Democrats for pushing tax increases now while also continuing their pursuit of a 4-percent surtax on household income above \$1 million. Supporters say the proposal, which needs approval from both branches in the next lawmaking session before it can go before voters as early as 2022, could raise up to \$2 billion per year for education and transportation.

Under an amendment Jones filed to the transportation revenue bill, the corporate, fuel, and rental car taxes – together accounting for about \$400 million in revenue – would all be repealed if the so-called “millionaires tax” is implemented.

“(The bill) has got to be considered in the context of: we’re going to raise taxes, we have the largest rainy day fund we’ve ever had, we just had a \$1 billion surplus last year, they’re pushing a \$2 billion tax increase – what are they doing this for?” Jones told the News Service last week.

Some lawmakers hope to see the bill take a clearer approach to how the roughly half-billion dollars in new revenue is spent. Democratic leaders proposed two \$27 million dedicated streams, one going to the MBTA and the other split between the state’s 15 regional transit authorities, but plan to use the bulk of the new funding during annual budget cycles or to backstop borrowing.

At least three different representatives filed proposals to lower or eliminate public transit fares, an idea Senate President Karen Spilka has also targeted.

A Rep. David LeBoeuf amendment would earmark one cent of the diesel tax to cover the cost of fare-free regional transit

authorities, while a Rep. Joan Meschino amendment would use one cent from the gas tax to fund free MBTA buses and another cent for free RTAs.

Rep. Tami Gouveia, an Acton Democrat and a member of the Legislature's progressive caucus, called for eliminating a sales tax discount for automobile trade-ins. Her office said the proposal could raise more than \$120 million per year, which would be used to offer free, reduced and discounted fares on public transit across the state with focus on environmental justice and low-income communities.

Transportation for Massachusetts Executive Director Chris Dempsey said the gas tax has increased at a significantly slower rate than MBTA and RTA fares over the past three decades, pushing more commuters into single-vehicle trips.

"The message we've been sending people is to drive more and take transit less," Dempsey, whose group endorsed Gouveia's amendment, said. "Free fares on the RTAs, which are relatively cheap as a policy at roughly \$30 million, sends the opposite message that we want people to take transit more."

The House bill calls for a study of expanded roadway tolling and so-called "congestion pricing," where prices vary to incentivize off-peak travel, but some members want to go further.

One amendment from Rep. Alice Peisch would establish tolls on all "Boston metropolitan area roadways and all interstate highways" with a plan for congestion pricing, and another from Rep. Carol Dykema would seek tolls on interstate highways at Massachusetts borders.

Peisch, of Wellesley, and Dykema, of Holliston, both represent constituents who regularly pay tolls for using the Massachusetts Turnpike.

Dempsey also said one of his top priorities is to see the

House adopt a Rep. Michelle Ciccolo amendment eliminating language in the base bill that would scale back the gas tax increase if and when the multi-state Transportation and Climate Initiative goes into effect and raises gas prices.

“TCI has the potential to be transformational,” Dempsey said. “We don’t want to see that potential diminished by a proposal that would net out that revenue and not leave us with more to invest in cleaner transportation.”

Leadership expects to tackle the revenue bill Wednesday and then take up a \$14.5 billion transportation bond bill (H 4506) – which trimmed \$3.5 billion off the borrowing amount Gov. Charlie Baker sought in his version – on Thursday.

With 82 amendments filed on the revenue bill and 467 on the bond bill, the schedule is subject to change. Democratic leadership informed members to be prepared for a possible formal session on Friday if debate stretches to a third day.

The vast majority of amendments on the bond bill seek earmarks for local transportation projects, although some seek further increases in Chapter 90 funding for road and bridge maintenance or expansion of the MBTA oversight board.

Massachusetts State Troopers capture suspect who ran down court officers

Troopers from the Massachusetts State Police Violent Fugitive Apprehension Section (MSP VFAS), after working throughout the night, this morning located and apprehended a Connecticut man

who ran down two judicial marshals after fleeing from a Manchester, Ct., courthouse yesterday.

The MSP VFAS Troopers captured JOSE A. LOPEZ, 42, in a room at the Motel 6 on Johnny Cake Hollow Road in Chicopee, Mass. MSP VFAS Troopers made the arrest at approximately 5:20 a.m. today after developing information on LOPEZ's whereabouts. Troopers from State Police-Springfield and Chicopee Police Officers assisted in the arrest.

MSP VFAS Troopers took LOPEZ into custody without incident and took him to the Chicopee Police Station for a courtesy booking, and then brought him to State Police-Springfield. Connecticut State Police were immediately notified of the arrest.

LOPEZ had been sought since Monday morning. The events that triggered the manhunt began when he appeared on his own recognizance in the Manchester, Ct., Superior Court for a hearing on a misdemeanor charge. At some point during the morning, LOPEZ, possibly fearing he was going to be held, fled the courthouse.

Upon fleeing from court LOPEZ got into a car he was using. Two judicial marshals chased him on foot. LOPEZ drove into the two marshals outside the courthouse and continued to flee in the vehicle. Both marshals were injured, one critically.

LOPEZ was known to have ties to the Springfield, Mass., area and MSP VFAS began assisting in the search yesterday. Troopers from MSP VFAS, the MSP Troop B Community Action Team, and the State Police Detective Unit for Hampden County worked throughout the night checking multiple possible addresses where LOPEZ may have been hiding.

They did not locate the suspect overnight, but the search continued into this morning and led MSP VFAS to the Motel 6.

LOPEZ will be arraigned later today in Chicopee District Court

as a fugitive. Prosecutors will make arrangements for his rendition to Connecticut.

Massachusetts family offers \$1,000 reward for locating missing teen

"I am offering a \$1000 reward to anyone who leads me to my daughter's whereabouts and I find her from your lead. No questions asked.

You can private message me and it will be held confidential by my family, on my word.

My daughter is still missing, I want to thank everyone for their prayers and assistance. I'm asking for anyone who knows Nikki's whereabouts to come forward, no questions asked.

This will be going into the media's hands soon. If anyone is holding her, you will be found and dealt with.

I want to thank the Hanover Police Department for caring so much and helping us through this ♥️. Places she is known to have been: Lawrence, Methuen, Brockton and Worcester **but she could be anywhere.**

Sincerely, Nichole's Family."

New Bedford landmark “Billy Boy Candies” to close its doors after 60 years of delighting locals

“Billy Boy Candies has been a family business for over 60 years. With that today we announce that we will be retiring this year.

We will stay open through Easter to serve our community for one last holiday. The Retail and wholesale store will close just after Easter in April.

We are extremely thankful for all our customers and being part of the New Bedford community as well as all of Southern New England.

Sweet Jackie who founded the retail store in late '70s after taking over for her father set off on a vision to grow the business and has done it with great success. Her husband John took over the wholesale for his father in law and continued showing the community what personal touch meant to wholesale distribution. From there the entire family has contributed to the success of this business and everyone will truly miss being a part of this great family.

Once again we thank everyone and look forward to seeing all one last time for the Easter season.

Thank you,
signed

-Billy Boy Candies Family.”

New Bedford mom fed up with impatient drivers at crosswalks

Today it seems there are two types of bad drivers that we will surely run into on a daily basis: the distracted driver on their cell phone and the angry, impatient ticking time bomb that will eventually road rage.

Getting caught behind a school bus or entering a school zone where there are crosswalks or crossing guards is just a fact of daily life. It's best to accept this fact of life and learn to be patient about it. Taking your anger out on someone because they are crossing the road is immature and childish. At most, waiting for someone to cross the road will take a few seconds away from where you are going and every single one of us will eventually be that person trying to cross the road.

One mom shares her recent experience:

"Seems some people need to be reminded about the law for stopping for pedestrians in a crosswalk.

After dropping off my daughter at school today (an elementary school at that), some guy gets upset because he has to wait a few extra seconds at a stop sign while I walk across the street in a clearly marked crosswalk. Crosswalks that are not at lights the pedestrian has the right of way, and since there were even two stop signs on the two one way streets, this should not have even been an issue.

I worry about if there wasn't a stop sign there." -Cheryl P.

Have you run into an impatient driver when crossing the road? Did they honk, make obscene hand gestures, or yell something at you? Share your experience below.

Massachusetts State Police take polar plunge to raise money for Special Olympics

This weekend Lieutenant Robert Clements and Captain Leonard Copenrath of the Massachusetts State Police joined officers from Hingham, Pembroke, and Hanover Police Departments to take a freezing dip for a great cause at the Nantasket Beach Polar Plunge in Hull.

Together they raised a combined amount of over \$4,000 and earned the "Top Law Enforcement Team" award. The Nantasket Beach Polar Plunge as a whole raised more than \$125,000. All of the funds raised will directly benefit the Special Olympics of Massachusetts!

Also in attendance was Senator Patrick O'Connor, representing Plymouth and Norfolk Districts.

Massachusetts State Police photos.



Up to \$150,000 from Southcoast Health available for Greater New Bedford not-for-profits

Southcoast Health announced today that it is now accepting grant proposals for the health system's 2020 Community Benefits Impact Opportunity Grant program.

The program will award a total of up to \$150,000 to not-for-profit organizations to help address public health needs across the region.

Grant proposals must align with the health priority areas identified in Southcoast Health's most recent Community Needs Assessment. Past grantees represent a variety of programs ranging from providing health screenings to the homeless to encouraging wellness through promoting healthy eating and physical activity opportunities. Additional projects have helped to build healthy families through positive youth development and provide socialization for elders experiencing memory issues and their caregivers.

The full list of criteria and more information about applying for the grant is available within the Grant Details tab of the online application, www.southcoast.org/community-benefits/programs/. The deadline for submission of a grant proposal is 11:59pm, on Tuesday, March 31, 2020.

"It is well documented that many factors contribute to health status," said Keith Hovan, President & CEO of Southcoast Health. "These include the social conditions that influence health, such as access to nutritious and affordable food, safe and healthy housing, educational and work opportunities, and safe neighborhoods and outdoor spaces for healthy activities."

The annual Community Benefits Impact Opportunity program is part of a larger Community Benefits initiative, which improves the health quality of life for hundreds of thousands of residents on the South Coast. In the most recent report, for fiscal year 2018, Southcoast Health announced it invested almost \$22.2 million in community benefits activities, including charity care, hospital and community-based programs, and collaboration with regional health centers and health and human service agencies.

"As a not-for-profit healthcare system, it is part of our mission to address our region's health and social needs," said Rachel Davis, Director of Community Benefits for Southcoast Health. "We are happy to provide this opportunity to support

the important work of our community partners.”

The Community Benefits Impact Opportunity Grant program has awarded 111 community impact grants totaling more than \$559,565 since it began in 2016. For more information, please visit <https://www.southcoast.org/community-benefits/>.

Buttonwood Park Zoo welcomes 3rd Bolivian Gray Titi Baby

It's official- the first baby born at the Buttonwood Park Zoo in 2020 is a Bolivian gray titi monkey! Born January 12, 2020, this is the third birth for 11 year-old mom, Madeira and 5 year-old father, Crumpet.

This Bolivian gray titi monkey family has been growing since 2017, with the initial birth of son Biscuit, who is now 2 and $\frac{1}{2}$ years old. In December of 2018, daughter Mila was born, evening out the family dynamics. For the first several months, the new baby will mostly remain on the back of its parents or siblings – Zoo staff will be able to determine gender once it spends more time off its family.

There are less than 55 Bolivian gray titi monkeys at 18 Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) accredited institutions in North America. These tree dwelling monkeys weigh around two to three pounds as adults, have a lifespan of 20-25 years and are active during the day. Members of the group exhibit social bonding by sitting side by side and twining their tails. There is a strong bond between adult mating pairs; they stay close and carry out activities together, including infant care. The new baby will spend approximately 80% of the time on the back of dad, Crumpet.

In the wild, this species is found in the tropical forests throughout central Bolivia and into Rondônia in eastern Brazil. Although their population in the wild is decreasing and agricultural activities have resulted in considerable habitat loss, Bolivian gray titi monkeys are reasonably tolerant of habitat disturbance and are adaptable to a variety of environments throughout its relatively wide range.

Crumpet, Madeira, Biscuit, Mila and the new baby reside in the Zoo's innovative Rainforest, Rivers & Reefs exhibit. Opened in July 2017, Rainforests, Rivers & Reefs focuses on the conservation of endangered and threatened Neotropical forest species and the health of the world's oceans while connecting guests with small, endangered primates from regions of South America and ocean dwelling species from around the world. Interpretive signage and on-site education inspires visitors to take small, tangible actions to reduce their impact on habitats and oceans, furthering the Zoo's conservation mission to protect wildlife from extinction.

The Zoo is located at 425 Hawthorn Street in New Bedford and is open from 9:00 am until 4:00 pm, with the last admission at 3:15 pm throughout the winter. Ticket prices for non-New Bedford Residents are \$10 for adults/\$6 for children 3-12; Ticket prices for New Bedford Residents are \$7.50 for adults/\$4.50 for children 3-12. For more information about the Zoo's programs, animals and exhibits, visit www.bpzoo.org.

New Bedford's Superintendent Thomas Anderson's statement

on COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

"Dear New Bedford Public Schools community,

I have shared in previous communications that New Bedford Public Schools is monitoring the unfolding international health risk related to COVID-19, also known as coronavirus, in addition to the yearly impact the flu has on thousands of people across the country www.cdc.gov/flu.

The precautions regarding the flu can also be applied to how we address concerns related to COVID 19.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) currently classifies the immediate health risk posed by COVID 19 as low. However, the CDC is urging all schools, businesses, health care providers, and individuals to prepare for a possible increase in COVID 19 cases in the United States. An increase in cases could potentially require many steps including cancellation of public events and school closings.

We are in close collaboration with local agencies including Southcoast Health (including St. Luke's Hospital), the City of New Bedford Health Department and we are following guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Boston Public Health Commission. I encourage you to visit their websites in addition to the CDC's website, for more information.

Our facilities team is spending additional time sanitizing classrooms and common spaces to help reduce the spread of germs. I would like to remind you that the most effective precautions to prevent the spread of respiratory viruses are thorough frequent hand washing, covering coughs and sneezes, and avoiding touching your face with unwashed hands. If children or family members have a fever and symptoms of a respiratory illness (such as cough or shortness of breath), please keep them home and contact your doctor. This applies to

staff as well.

Please be assured that the health and well-being of our students and staff are our top priority. This time will be stressful for all and I ask that we all work to stay informed and be empathetic to individual challenges. I remain particularly grateful for the strength and togetherness of this community."