



DECEMBER 2022

# STATE GOVERNMENT TRANSITION REPORT

Recommendations for the Healey - Driscoll Administration





December 19, 2022

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Governor-Elect Healey and Lt. Governor-Elect Driscoll,

On behalf of our 130 member businesses and institutions, congratulations on your resounding victory during the campaign for Governor of Massachusetts. A Better City leadership and our members are eager to work with you and your administration to maintain the Commonwealth's position as one of the best places in the nation to work, live, and visit. There are some difficult challenges ahead, but we are confident in the leadership, vision, and experience you bring to Governor's Office.

A Better City continues to focus on the transportation and infrastructure, land use and development, and energy and environmental policies that are central to Greater Boston's economic competitiveness and future growth. In all these policy areas, we are eager to continue our close collaboration with state government. As you complete the official transition period and look to begin implementing your priorities, please know that A Better City and the business community are ready to partner and support your efforts.

Together, we face historic challenges in the next few years. Massachusetts is facing crumbling infrastructure across the state and a crisis at the MBTA, economic uncertainty due changing work patterns and the broader financial climate, and increasing threats from the worsening impacts of climate change. Many of the policies needed to respond to these challenges will be interconnected, as the next approach with public transit will indirectly impact the policies for reducing carbon emissions, managing traffic congestion, supporting transportation equity, and addressing affordable housing.

We prepared specific recommendations related to state government and hope you will consider these ideas as part of your near-term agenda.

Congratulations again and we look forward to working with you to achieve your goals of a stronger, prosperous, and more equitable Commonwealth that benefits the people today and generations to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Richard Dimino'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Richard' and last name 'Dimino' clearly legible.

Richard A. Dimino  
President & CEO

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A Better City represents a multi-sector group of nearly 130 business leaders united around a common goal: to enhance the Greater Boston region's economic health, competitiveness, equitable growth, sustainability, and quality of life for all communities. By amplifying the voice of the business community through collaboration and consensus-building, A Better City develops solutions and influences policy in three critical areas: 1. transportation and infrastructure, 2. land use and development, and 3. energy and the environment. A Better City is committed to building an equitable and inclusive future for the region that benefits and uplifts residents, workers, and businesses in Greater Boston.

# TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

A Better City believes the future prosperity of the Commonwealth is directly related to the strength, reliability, and affordability of the statewide transportation system. Today, our statewide transportation system is in crisis. An immediate challenge for the Healey-Driscoll Administration is rebuilding the existing public transit system and encouraging mass transit for commuting and travel throughout the Commonwealth. In addition to fixing today's transportation deficiencies and making progress on transportation equity concerns, there are unprecedented opportunities to build the future network of roads, bridges, transit, and connections for bicycles and pedestrians. A forward-thinking approach on delivering major transportation infrastructure projects can help achieve our common goals for reducing carbon emissions, managing traffic congestion, supporting transportation equity, and addressing affordable housing needs throughout the Commonwealth. We look forward to future collaborations on these challenges and make the following recommendations.

## Recommendation #1: Strengthen the MBTA and Position it to Serve the Boston Metropolitan Region as a 21st Century Transit Authority

- **Appoint senior level transportation officials to lead change at the MBTA that results in public transit service that is safe, reliable, affordable, induces demand, and meets future economic and mobility requirements.** In January, the Healey-Driscoll administration will be able to reshape the leadership of the MBTA through the appointment of a new MBTA General Manager and a new Secretary of Transportation. These appointments are critical to ensuring the region has a public transit system that delivers the service riders and employers need, supports economic recovery, regional competitiveness, and helps the Commonwealth meet its statewide decarbonization goals. A Better City recommends that the new administration appoint leaders who not only have a strong background in public transit, but also have the management and leadership skills required to successfully restore trust, prioritize transparency and accountability, and deliver safe, reliable, and equitable service, while making critical capital investments to address the state of good repair and future needs.
- **Designate a new Chair of the MBTA Board of Directors and replace the three outgoing MBTA Board members.** The current seven-member board of directors appointed in September 2021 reversed many encouraging plans and blueprints established by the former governance body, the Fiscal and Management Control Board (FMCB). The new administration will be able to make three appointments to the MBTA Board of Directors and can designate a new Chair of the Board. A Better City recommends that the new administration select individuals who place the highest priority on creating a culture of transparency, accountability, and safety, while restoring full-service transit schedules and advancing equity goals through a robust means tested fare program in 2023.

- **Create a “safety directorate” position within the Governor’s Office to coordinate and oversee safety improvements at the MBTA and Department of Public Utilities (DPU).** This position would oversee a “MBTA Safety Masterplan” that finally addresses the 2019 Safety Review Panel Report findings and the current responses to the FTA Safety Management Inspection. In the near-term, A Better City recommends empowering the DPU staff role to provide professional safety oversight, while engaging with legislators and the public on the potential of a new safety oversight organization.
- **Restore full service across all modes to induce demand, support the regional economic recovery, and safeguard the region’s competitiveness.** Pandemic-era service reductions remain in place to varying degrees across all MBTA modes despite steady ridership return. Today, commuter rail and bus ridership both exceed 75% of pre-covid ridership, while rapid transit subways lines and water ferry are at almost 60%. Current service levels and reliability on rapid transit, especially on the Orange and Red Lines that are continuing to experience service delays, are harming current riders and discouraging transit use. A Better City recommends that restoring full-service schedules be a top priority for the new MBTA leadership. This will require immediate action to resolve persistent safety issues, workforce shortage challenges related to rules and practices for the bus and rapid transit operations, and procurement delays related to new Red and Orange Line vehicles.
- **Prioritize fare equity to close the gap in low-income fare programs and expand affordable access to all MBTA riders.** The MBTA low-income fare program does not cover qualified adult riders with no disability between the ages of 26-64. Pre-pandemic, this age group represented 82% of bus riders, 91% of ferry and commuter rail riders, and 88% of rapid transit and silver line riders. The FMCB called on the MBTA to finalize details on a pilot program to expand low-income fares to this broader group and close the affordability gap. Specifically, they asked the MBTA to begin a pilot program by September 1, 2022. Unfortunately, the current board did not follow this guidance. A Better City recommends that new appointees to MBTA leadership allocate sufficient resources to create a means-tested fare program and advance fare equity in Spring or Summer of 2023. In addition, the new board and leadership should evaluate the status of AFC 2.0 and make immediate recommendations to ensure its implementation and or course correction.
- **Prepare a robust transit mitigation strategy prior to the May 2023 full-closure of the Sumner Tunnel.** MassDOT is planning a tunnel restoration project that will require a complete closure of the tunnel that is expected to last for four months. This will significantly disrupt mobility throughout Greater Boston, but an adequate and fully funded mitigation plan has not been developed yet.

## Recommendation #2: Develop Comprehensive and Sustainable Transportation Finance Plan

- **Prepare for the fiscal cliff that threatens the future of the MBTA and Greater Boston's economic and mobility needs.** The MBTA recently disclosed a projected operating budget gap that will exceed \$400 million annually in less than two years. However, the true numbers are likely much worse, because the MBTA leadership is not including the increased costs from the FTA's safety management inspection. These increased staffing requirements and new safety procedures could potentially add at least another hundred million dollars annually to this deficit. The MBTA's capital investment plan is also facing a large annual gap to address the state of good repair backlog and system modernization plans.
- **Address funding gaps for roads, bridges, and RTA service throughout the Commonwealth.** Projected funding deficits are not limited to the MBTA. Our highways, bridges, and local roads are older and in much worse shape than similar assets in other parts of the nation. The MassDOT Highway Division is currently borrowing against future federal aid, as part of the "Next Generation Bridge Program" that began in 2021. When this program ends, MassDOT anticipates a funding gap just to maintain and preserve our existing roads and bridges. Infrastructure repairs and maintenance to major tunnels in Greater Boston will require additional resources. Municipally owned roads and bridges throughout the Commonwealth are in poor condition. There is also a critical need to increase transit service through the Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs).
- **Develop a forward-looking finance plan for large-scale infrastructure projects.** In terms of new projects, every major transportation and decarbonization infrastructure project discussed during the 2022 campaign from the Red-Blue Connector, to Regional Rail electrification, to East-West Rail, will struggle to move forward without additional financial resources and new financing plans.
- **Assess the scale of the statewide funding problem in 2022, then propose potential solutions in 2023.** It is very likely that the Commonwealth will be facing an annual transportation funding gap that exceeds a billion dollars by the end of the Healey-Driscoll Administration's first term. Federal infrastructure grants and the new revenue from Question 1 will help with some capital infrastructure needs, but these programs will not solve all the critically important anticipated challenges. Developing potential options to address this deficit will take time, but the work should begin in 2022 to prepare legislation in 2023.
- **Consider a new blue-ribbon finance commission with representation from the business community.** A Better City recommends creating an official commission through an Executive Order. Governor Baker took this approach with the [Commission on the Future of Transportation](#). MassDOT produced the [Congestion in the Commonwealth](#) through a similar manner in 2019. The Healey-Driscoll Administration should assemble a broad group of experts

to calculate and assess the statewide transportation and climate needs, or this work can be done incrementally with a more focused effort that looks at the safety needs of the MBTA, carbon emission reduction plans described in the Clean Energy and Climate Plan goals, resiliency infrastructure, the future of electric vehicles and the impact on the state gas tax, or the potential options for roadway pricing. These conversations regarding transportation finance should involve leaders in the business community as well as advocates from transportation and environmental organizations. In recent years, A Better City published multiple reports about the financial gaps at the MBTA and MassDOT Highway Division. Today, a new comprehensive approach is necessary to creating effective plans that achieve our shared goals of better transit, less traffic, and lower carbon emissions throughout the Commonwealth.

## Recommendation #3: Enhance Procurement Mechanisms to Advance Capital Improvements and Service Priorities

- **Explore different ways to rebuild MBTA infrastructure and respond to the FTA Safety Inspection.** There is a significant level of deferred maintenance on the old and ageing MBTA infrastructure and assets, which is crippling the Authority's ability to deliver safe, reliable, and frequent service. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) safety management inspection and subsequent special directives underscore the need to stay on top of capital improvements to the system, particularly those related to safety. Under current laws related to procurement, hiring, and capital delivery, the MBTA struggles to effectively run their capital program, advance safety maintenance, and respond to the FTA's requirements. This bottleneck is delaying actions that would improve both service plans and infrastructure projects that directly benefit the riders and our economy. Bringing the system into a state of good repair as well as making important forward-looking capital investments will take many years and require billions of dollars in new spending, but it may also require new ways to provide transit service and deliver on infrastructure goals.
- **Consider changes to procurement practices to facilitate project delivery for priority capital projects and restoration of full service.** The magnitude of the transportation investment plans needed to modernize the MBTA and decarbonize the commuter rail system is equivalent to the Boston Harbor clean-up effort from the late-1980s. At the time, Massachusetts developed special rules related to public management, procurement, and partnerships with the private sector construction firms to spend billions of dollars on the Deer Island treatment plant and related restoration efforts. A Better City recommends the Administration consider changes in state law to expand capital delivery options for the MBTA, while also maintaining the right balance of public sector oversight. These options include expanding and strengthening the MBTA's capacity to engage in public-private partnerships for the future of the commuter rail and bus network. Absent this change, it will be difficult for the MBTA to tackle challenges

related to rebuilding the MBTA bus network, system resiliency needs, and decarbonization plans.

- **Take immediate steps to prepare for the next procurement cycle for the operations and management of the commuter rail system.** The state's contract with Keolis runs through 2026. A key question will be to define the scope and duration of the next commuter rail operator. There may be opportunities for vendors to provide private equity to support the system if the contract is structured for an appropriate time into the future. This next contract is going to be very complicated. It will take two years just to prepare the procurement and require a multi-disciplined approach. With the discussion of East-West Rail and expanded Regional Rail, it will make sense to examine the ideal model for the Commonwealth's passenger rail service and its relationship to governance and financing.

## **Recommendation #4: Create a Major Infrastructure Project Team with a Director of Infrastructure to Maximize Federal Grant and New Funding Opportunities that Advance Large-Scale State Projects**

- **Reorganize state government to create a Director of Infrastructure who will lead the pursuit of federal infrastructure funds.** Ambitious and successful infrastructure projects such as the clean-up of Boston Harbor, creation of the Greenway parks, and development of the South Boston Seaport district produced the Commonwealth we know today. Strategic investments in transportation infrastructure provide durable platforms for economic growth that can last for decades. There are opportunities today to deliver the next major projects that will secure a stronger, cleaner, and more efficient transportation system in Massachusetts, but it will require better coordination and determination within state government. Considering the amount of federal dollars available through the Biden Administration, A Better City recommends that the Commonwealth move with greater urgency to align state projects for federal aid. The Biden Administration's federal infrastructure bill is heavily weighted towards competitive grant programs, so there is an ongoing nationwide competition for money. This offers a potential solution for many infrastructure projects that are unable to move forward without additional funding. It also can mean Massachusetts could miss out on major federal dollars if state government is not focused on aligning with federal goals and timelines.
- **Streamline projects to improve chances in future applications.** Next year, there will be opportunities to improve our previous grant applications and this Director of Infrastructure role could ensure any state government agencies are properly working together to improve the state's chances to win awards that result in hundreds of millions of dollars. This may require a focused effort to streamline the design and permitting phases of projects to meet federal



guidelines or capacity in the state capital budget to match any federal aid. A Better City recommends creating a position directly in the Governor's office with the authority to do this work and take the lead in finding partnerships with organizations like Amtrak to assist with state infrastructure projects. Governor Patrick created a Director of Infrastructure to manage the Obama Administration's federal stimulus funding, and this model may be needed again.

- **Explore why Massachusetts did not succeed with larger federal infrastructure grants in 2022.** This past year, MassDOT applied for large infrastructure grants to support the Cape Cod Bridge repairs and the Allston I-90 Multimodal Project. Unfortunately, Massachusetts has not been successful in securing funding for either project. It is essential to understand why Massachusetts is failing to find success with these larger infrastructure applications. A Better City recommends that the new Administration consider appointing a point person on major projects that require resources and approval from multiple state agencies. It is very possible that state agencies lack the capacity to successfully win major federal grants related to complex infrastructure projects and this person can help reshape the Commonwealth's approach.

## **Recommendation #5: Dedicate 50% of the Question 1 Dollars to Support Transportation Infrastructure Projects**

- **Begin the implementation of Question 1 by setting clear rules that include an even split of funds between transportation and education plans.** The people of Massachusetts voted to support Question 1 and the new revenue for transportation and public education. While A Better City did not take a position on this issue during the campaign, it is now essential to create a clear, transparent process on how this money will be used. An important first step is to create a simple process that distributes this new money evenly between transportation and education programs.
- **Create a new transportation trust fund that is used to advance priority transportation infrastructure projects.** A Better City recommends that the Healey-Driscoll Administration create two dedicated trust funds next year and then propose half of the Question 1 tax collections are sent to the fund for public education and the other half be deposited into a new trust fund for transportation infrastructure. Once you create a reoccurring revenue stream into this trust fund, the transportation money can be used to finance new infrastructure debt, match future federal grants, and take advantage of recently passed transportation bond bills. By setting up a transparent process, this money can jumpstart transformational projects that will benefit the economy, improve air quality, and benefit future generations
- **Resist the pressure to spend transportation and education dollars at the same pace.** The spending of transportation infrastructure dollars is fundamentally different from the process of spending on most education programs, with the main exception of new school construction

that is managed by the School Building Authority. For transportation, the Question 1 funding is intended to fix roads, bridges, and public transit, so it should be viewed as a capital program. Capital projects take time and often do not fit neatly into annual funding timelines. Creating two trust funds for this money will allow for transportation and education funds to move at their own appropriate speed, while showing the public exactly that this money is being used or planned to be spent to advance the administration's transportation and educational goals.

## Recommendation #6: Improve Access to Micro-mobility Opportunities

- **Take immediate action to support and scale the expansion of active transportation and micro-mobility options.** Bicycles, e-bikes, and other light electric vehicles represent an impactful opportunity to jumpstart our decarbonization goals and make meaningful progress toward our 2030 climate commitments. Half of all trips in the Commonwealth are four miles or less, and most of these are taken in personal cars and trucks. The transportation sector produces roughly 40% of GHG emissions in the state and targeting those short trips with mode shift strategies should be a top priority.
- **Unlock the potential of active transportation and micro-mobility through infrastructure and incentives.** Based on corroborated research from Portland State University, roughly 60% of people are “interested but concerned” about riding a bicycle for transportation, and their first concern is safety. Safe cycling infrastructure like bike trails, separated cycle tracks, and protected bike lanes encourage ridership and should be fast-tracked to create a comprehensive network so that “biking in Massachusetts will be a safe, comfortable, and convenient option for everyday travel” as described in the 2021 Statewide Bicycle Transportation Plan. The second concern is sweating and fatigue due to distance and terrain, which is easily addressed by e-bikes, which enable longer and steeper trips without extra effort. Class 1 & 2 e-bikes were formally recognized in state law in 2022 and the Transportation Bond Bill authorized an e-bike rebate program. The Healey-Driscoll Administration should prioritize the launch of this e-bike rebate program.
- **Expand state support for bikeshare and study future governance and funding models.** Bikeshare systems provide bicycles for short-term hire within a fixed system footprint, enabling multi-modal trips that complement public transit. The Healey-Driscoll Administration should increase funding and expand the Shared Streets & Spaces program that has helped grow bikeshare systems like ValleyBike in Central Mass and Bluebikes in metro-Boston and Salem. Further, A Better City recommends that MassDOT conduct a review of the current bikeshare business model, current and future demand projections, and study the potential benefits of greater state coordination and integration with public transit systems.

# ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

The scale of the challenges related to climate change mitigation and adaptation is difficult to understate and will impact our communities, our built environment, and our regional economy. With climate change, Massachusetts state government is facing a threat that will require leveraging substantial resources at a regional scale and a multi-year effort to decarbonize our economy, create more resilient neighborhoods, protect the coastline, and prioritize environmental justice communities in our climate solutions. To achieve these goals, A Better City offers the following recommendations.

## Recommendation #7: Clarify and Streamline the Implementation of Buildings Policies

- **Create a user-friendly toolkit to explain the various building policies currently in place and under development and hire additional DOER staff to provide support and guidance.** Based on feedback from our member businesses and institutions, A Better City is concerned that inconsistent and unclear building policies could jeopardize equitable growth and economic development in the Commonwealth. Lack of clarity around how municipal policies for existing buildings like the City of Boston's Building Emissions Reduction and Disclosure Ordinance (BERDO 2.0) and the City of Cambridge's Building Energy Use Disclosure Ordinance (BEUDO) intersect with state-level statutory climate commitments may lead investors and businesses to reconsider staying within the Commonwealth. Additionally, for new construction, patchwork efforts to decarbonize municipalities may lead to confusion, without sufficient alignment across policies like the anticipated stretch energy code, the new Specialized Municipal Opt-In Stretch Energy Code, anticipated municipal demonstration projects for fossil fuel bans by local approval in ten municipalities, and Boston's Zero Net Carbon zoning for new construction. At this critical juncture, the Healey-Driscoll Administration must provide clarity, consistency, and guidance to both developers and municipalities regarding the implementation of pending and new building policies across jurisdictions. Specifically, A Better City recommends that the Healey-Driscoll Administration develop a publicly accessible and user-friendly toolkit that maps out the various state and municipal policies, codes, and regulations adopted and under development, that provides clear guidance regarding preemption and implementation. Furthermore, A Better City recommends hiring additional staff within DOER to support this and other building policy efforts, including the establishment of the State's first-ever reporting database for building emissions as mandated per the Climate Act of 2022.
- **Establish a statewide Building Decarbonization Task Force with developers and building owners to identify and troubleshoot technical and financial feasibility challenges.** For large commercial and industrial existing buildings, particularly hard-to-decarbonize buildings like healthcare, labs, and research institutions, examples of existing building decarbonization are difficult, if not impossible, to find in Massachusetts. A Better City recommends establishing a

Building Decarbonization Task Force to address technical and financial challenges to building decarbonization that includes building owners and developers across building typologies, with particular emphasis on practitioners within hard-to-decarbonize buildings. This Task Force could work alongside the Global Warming Solution Act Implementation Advisory Committee's Buildings Working Group, the Energy Efficiency Advisory Council's C&I Working Group, MassCEC (particularly the EmPower and Buildings programs within MassCEC, which focus on high-performance buildings), as well as anticipated governing bodies like the Grid Modernization Council and Transmission Working Group to be established as per the Climate Act of 2022, and the City of Boston's forthcoming BERDO 2.0 Commercial Real Estate and District Energy Working Groups.

- **Launch a Commonwealth Building Challenge to establish pilot projects by sector that demonstrate how existing commercial and industrial buildings can meet emissions reduction goals.** As mentioned above, the technology needed to decarbonize existing commercial and industrial (C&I) buildings, especially those that are particularly hard to decarbonize, is not yet available, nor do case studies exist in most cases. To address knowledge gaps and to rapidly scale up deep energy retrofits in large existing buildings, A Better City suggests following a model similar to the [New York's Empire Building Challenge](#), in which large C&I building owners and developers are working with NYSERDA to demonstrate deep emissions reductions across a range of building typologies. In Massachusetts, creating a Commonwealth Building Challenge could be transformative in providing much-needed case studies of existing buildings, particularly hard-to-decarbonize large C&I buildings in our climate zone. The Commonwealth Building Challenge could also build upon MassCEC's [recent RFP for financing building decarbonization](#) to provide financial support, while working alongside the DPU and ISO-NE to address interconnection and transmission challenges.

## **Recommendation #8: Prioritize the Decarbonization, Resilience, Reliability, and Affordability of the Electric Grid**

- **Develop a roadmap for electrifying the buildings and transportation sectors that does not strain the grid and prioritizes decarbonization, resilience, reliability, and affordability.** To support a safe and just transition to a decarbonized economy, Massachusetts must ensure that we are pursuing sufficient grid modernization and capacity upgrades alongside the electrification of our building and transportation sectors. A Better City recommends that the Healey-Driscoll Administration direct DPU and DOER to jointly examine the projected increase in electricity demand from electrified buildings and transportation by load zone and sub-load zone over time, in conjunction with an analysis of the current capacity of the grid by load zone and sub-load zone. This would help to understand what areas have the capacity for electrification now, and what areas will require additional capacity before pursuing



electrification. Understanding this capacity would help to sequence the electrification of buildings and transportation based on current and new electrical capacity to ensure that the increasing demand is safely and strategically managed, and grid failure is avoided. A Better City suggests looking into the Urban Green Council's *Grid Ready: Powering NYC's All Electric Buildings* [study](#) and considering how such a framework might be applicable in Massachusetts and within the ISO-NE region. Since a state-level Grid Modernization Council and Transmission Working Group are both anticipated to be established shortly as mandated by the 2022 Climate Act, A Better City also suggests that this study be coordinated with both the Grid Modernization Council and the Transmission Working Group.

- **Work with the Grid Modernization Council, Transmission Working Group, Department of Public Utilities, and Legislature to address barriers to the expansion of renewable energy, including onsite solar and Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs), as well as energy storage and district energy solutions.** A Better City continues to hear from our members and partner organizations that significant delays remain in the deployment of onsite solar, hindering urgently needed renewable energy expansion that would both help to decarbonize buildings and to minimize strain on the grid's limited capacity. A Better City urges the Healey-Driscoll Administration to work with the DPU, Legislature, Grid Modernization Council, and Transmission Working Group to address challenges with the interconnection and transmission of renewable energy. The Healey-Driscoll Administration must help to speed up the permitting, pricing, and financing of renewable energy wherever possible, including in the expanded research and implementation of district energy solutions. Finally, A Better City urges the Healey-Driscoll Administration to support research and implementation of expanded energy storage capacity within Massachusetts, including opportunities for long duration and utility-scale storage, as well as building-level energy storage.

## **Recommendation #9: Establish a Resilience Commission to Help Govern, Implement, and Finance Regional Climate and Community Resilience Initiatives and Lead Opportunities to Leverage Federal Funding for District-Wide Approaches to Resilient Infrastructure**

- **Catalyze the implementation of regional climate resilience projects.** Massachusetts has been a leader in climate resilience planning—now it is time to transition from planning to implementation. The real estate and development sector must continue to be part of the solution, but large-scale municipal and state infrastructure is also needed to protect our transportation system and to safeguard and activate our economic hubs and communities. In the near term, the Healey-Driscoll Administration could work with Mayor Wu to seize the

opportunity to tee up big-ticket infrastructure projects—like seawalls and engineered wetlands—for federal funding from opportunities within the Inflation Reduction Act and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. At the state level, the Resilient MA Action Team is well-positioned to identify capital projects within state agencies to protect critical infrastructure, including MBTA assets. Unfunded projects identified through the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program could also provide a pipeline of smaller-scale capital projects to advance with federal funding. At the city level, the Climate Ready Boston plans contain an array of critical flood protection projects needed to safeguard our business districts and residential communities alike. In the medium term, A Better City recommends the Healey-Driscoll Administration consider working with the Legislature to develop an action plan for funding, building, and maintaining resilient infrastructure investments across the state. This important work could be managed by establishing a Resilience Commission as detailed in A Better City’s Commonwealth op-ed [here](#) and Boston Globe Letter to the Editor [here](#), which explain why a Resilience Commission could be transformative for the Commonwealth’s climate resilience implementation.

## **Recommendation #10: Establish a Climate Bank to Help Provide Incentives for Large Building Decarbonization Projects, Support Regional Resilient Critical Infrastructure, and Help Fund Climate Solutions in Environmental Justice and Low-Income Communities**

- **Expand financial resources to fund decarbonization and regional climate resilience.** Additional funding and financing models are needed to scale up building sector decarbonization and to meet our newly established statutory climate commitments. A Better City recommends establishing a statewide climate bank to provide incentives for large building decarbonization demonstration projects like the Commonwealth Building Challenge mentioned above, to support regional resilient critical infrastructure upgrades, and to help fund climate solutions in environmental justice and low-income communities as we seek to implement a just transition to a decarbonized economy. The Climate or Green Bank model has the potential to catalyze public-private partnerships, to de-risk investments in deep energy retrofits in large C&I buildings, to prioritize regional funding opportunities across municipalities, and to enable long-term financing opportunities that work across capital budget cycles. In addition to exploring opportunities to leverage federal funding from the Inflation Reduction Act for possible MA Climate Bank seed funding, A Better City recommends connecting with the Boston Green Ribbon Commission, which is in the process of developing a two-year pilot for a MA/Boston Climate Bank in partnership with the City of Boston, Bank of America, MassCEC, and others (A Better City sits on the MA/Boston Climate Bank Steering Committee).

## Recommendation #11: Continue the Governor's Global Warming Solutions Act Implementation Advisory Committee (IAC), Including Critical Representation from the Business Community

- **Empower business representation on state climate advisory committees.** A Better City is honored to serve on the GWSA Implementation Advisory Committee, to co-chair the Transportation Sector Working Group, and contribute substantively to the Buildings Sector Working Group. A Better City would appreciate the opportunity to continue to provide expert policy guidance and to represent the perspectives of the Greater Boston business community, which is vital to ensuring the successful implementation of the Commonwealth's climate policies.

## Recommendation #12: Invest in Equitable Workforce Development to Support the Transition to a Decarbonized Economy

- **Leverage the power of equitable workforce development to meet state decarbonization goals.** To achieve our statutory climate commitments, the Healey-Driscoll Administration must support ways to scale up decarbonization of the built environment, as transportation accounts for the number one source of emissions statewide and buildings are the second largest source of emissions in the Commonwealth. To decarbonize the buildings sector, significant equitable workforce development is needed to complement deep weatherization and decarbonization of existing buildings through digital technologies like Buildings Automation Systems (BAS), to support on-site renewable energy as mandated in new building policies, and to maintain tree canopy on both private and public lands. There are also significant opportunities within the transportation sector, in which workforce development could help to fill needed positions within the MBTA and regional transportation agencies, as well as anticipated positions that will arise with the decarbonization and modernization of our transportation systems. As stated in our [comment letter](#) on the Baker-Polito Administration's 2050 Clean Energy and Climate Plan, A Better City supports the focus on equitable workforce development opportunities as a crosscutting policy priority and suggests looking into Boston's PowerCorps model for equitable workforce development at the state-level.

# LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT

The strategies over the past few decades that transformed Massachusetts into one of the strongest economic centers in the nation should continue to be a guide for the next several years. The Commonwealth's economy is strong because of a highly talented workforce, a healthy business climate, and major investments in public infrastructure. Today, we face new challenges related to the global economy and climate change, but these core strategies together can maintain our reputation as a world-class area where people want to work, live, and visit. State government can lead with future development projects and smart land use policies that will grow our economy, address affordable and workforce housing issues, and support coastal resilience and carbon emission reduction plans.

## Recommendation #13: Advance Regional Rail Investments to Simultaneously Address Climate Change, Equity, Mobility Challenges, and Seize Future Economic Opportunities

- **Prioritize policies and funding to advance Regional Rail and electrification of the commuter rail system.** The MBTA Commuter Rail ranks sixth in the nation for busiest commuter rail system, encompassing 388 miles across 14 rail lines and 80 communities, carrying over 125,000 passenger trips each weekday pre-pandemic. It relies entirely on diesel locomotives to bring commuters into the city core and is one the T's biggest contributor of greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, the system has historically focused on service for peak hour commutes to and from the city and has not been a viable alternative transportation option during off-peak times. In 2018, with growing congestion in the region and pressure mounting for the state to reach net-zero by 2050, the FMCB called on the MBTA to "transform the current commuter rail line into a significantly more productive, equitable, and decarbonized enterprise," and take immediate steps to implement Phase 1 of a three Phase Regional Rail process. This project is not fully funded in the MBTA's capital plans. A Better City recommends the new administration prioritize Regional Rail during its first capital infrastructure budget process.
- **Accelerate the implementation and benefits of Regional Rail in Greater Boston to maximize economic opportunity, affordable housing, and environmental justice and climate opportunities.** This includes steps to develop and launch an Electric Multiple Unit (EMU) Pilot on the Providence/Stoughton Line as well as EMU powered service on the Fairmount and the Newburyport/Rockport Line through Lynn (covering Boston, Everett, Chelsea, and Revere and referred to as the Environmental Justice corridor). The work on these fundamental projects is currently delayed and may be in jeopardy if the MBTA moves forward with a different technology choice (i.e., battery electric multiple units or BEMUs). A Better City recommends the new administration request an update from the MBTA on the status of the rail transformation



initiative and call on the T to implement without further delay aspects that benefit the environmental justice communities.

- **Provide more reliable and frequent service on the current commuter rail system to promote mode shift that encourages commuters to use transit instead of driving, which helps achieve statewide climate and congestion goals.** One of the most impactful ways to reduce carbon emissions from the transportation sector is through an electrification of the commuter rail system and implementation of more reliable and frequent regional rail like service to promote mode shift out of cars. Keolis and the MBTA took steps to implement more frequent all-day service; however, more work is needed to deliver 15-minute headways in the urban core and 30-minute headways to communities outside the city. A Better City recommends that the new administration take early action to evaluate what the MBTA and Keolis need (e.g. assets, workforce, etc.) to fast track improvements to headways that induce demand.

## **Recommendation #14: Examine Opportunities to Positively Leverage Transit-Oriented Development Associated with Recent State Law**

- **Challenge the MBTA and MassDOT to put greater emphasis on housing and transit orientated development projects.** Massachusetts' housing affordability crisis is another compelling reason to invest in mass transit projects and the transformation of commuter rail. The recently enacted law requiring multi-family housing zones in every MBTA community could result in over three hundred thousand additional housing units located near transit stations, according to [an estimate by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council](#). Successful implementation of this law will also require the MBTA infrastructure to evolve to accommodate these potential riders. A Better City recommends that the Healey-Driscoll Administration require the MBTA and MassDOT to support this law by identifying any potential real estate or state-owned assets that can be developed into new housing opportunities. The Massachusetts state capital plan can also provide more funding for public water, electrical, and sewer infrastructure related to TOD projects. An examination of the federal infrastructure bill also offers new opportunities to accelerate TOD projects.

## **Recommendation #15: Capitalize on the Immediate Opportunities in Allston to Create a New West Station, Enhanced Open Space, and Provide Regional Connections that will Grow Our Economy**

- **Realize the transformational opportunity in Allston that can benefit the I-90 corridor and region.** Like the Central Artery Tunnel Project, the I-90 Allston Multimodal Project is a once-in-

a-generation opportunity to restitch our urban fabric. The project will create the western gateway to Boston's urban core, eliminate a sixty-year-old barrier at the edge of the Charles River, rebuild the Turnpike Extension and the interchange in a safer alignment, and provide a multimodal transit hub at West Station. The construction of West Station will support the transit-oriented development of 11 million square feet or more while connecting transit riders from the west to Kendall Square and Longwood. When fully built out, development on the site can annually generate a contribution to the Gross Domestic Product of over \$6 billion dollars and over \$200 million in new total tax revenue. Further, the Multimodal Project will replace a rail yard and toll booths already removed that allow for a straighter highway alignment, removal of the elevated viaduct barrier and replacement of the Turnpike on the ground, installation of new rail facilities including West Station, and a new network of pedestrian and bicycle paths, open space and enhanced river bank, and neighborhood connections.

- **Consider the regional economic benefits.** According to the [economic impact study prepared by AECOM and managed by A Better City](#), this project will create a regional hub of innovation, commerce, and employment with direct rail access on the Worcester-Framingham Commuter Rail line, that will contribute to economic development and smart growth in the 35-mile corridor extending westward from Allston to Newton, MetroWest, and Worcester.
- **Take action in 2023 on the next steps that will move the project forward.** A Better City recommends that the new administration put its full support behind this transformational opportunity that will result in considerable transit, environmental, and economic benefits to the statewide economy. Next year, there are necessary steps to unlocking this project.
  - **Expedite the environmental review process.** In 2014, MassDOT created a Task Force of approximately 60 discrete individuals and entities that included A Better City to help guide the preliminary design and permitting of this project. MassDOT recently announced a decision to select the all-at-grade design as the preferred alternative project scheme. This year, it is time to complete the environmental review and prepare the next phase to implement this design plan.
  - **Limit the scope of a Viaduct Preservation Contract.** MassDOT is currently considering near term safety enhancements to the elevated highway structure. This work must be well-coordinated so it does not undermine the viability of the full Multimodal Project.
  - **Prepare for a new “MEGA Grant” application in 2023 that will improve upon the 2022 submittal.** There is a broad coalition among stakeholders, municipalities, and public officials in support of this project, which should help in securing federal grant funding. The Healey-Driscoll Administration build upon the consensus of support and make the case this project is worthy of federal grant funding and can be a signature accomplishment of the bipartisan infrastructure bill that benefits the people of the Commonwealth.

