



Office of
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Rep. Kane supports \$10.9 billion infrastructure bill
Rep. Kane secures \$5M earmark for the Route 20 roadway improvements

BOSTON – State Representative Hannah Kane (R-Shrewsbury) recently voted to support a \$10.9 billion infrastructure bond bill that provides funding for safety upgrades at the MBTA, the planning and design of the East-West Rail project, and hundreds of local transportation and environmental projects across the state.

House Bill 4897, *An Act relative to Massachusetts' transportation resources and climate*, also known as the MassTRAC bill, was engrossed by the House of Representatives on a vote of 155-0 on June 23. The bill is a redrafted version of legislation that was initially filed by Governor Charlie Baker on March 17 to take advantage of the funding opportunities provided in the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) that was signed in November of 2021.

In addition to providing funding for interstate and non-interstate highway projects as well as non-federally aided roadways, House Bill 4897 also contains funding for rail and airport improvements as well as the planning and programming of municipal roads, bridges, sidewalks, transit facilities, shared-use paths, and bicycle, pedestrian and other multi-modal facilities. Additional funding is provided for climate change adaptation and for expanding electric vehicle charging infrastructure, incentive programs promoting e-bikes and public transportation, the replacement of high-emissions vehicles, and other steps to reduce emissions.

During floor debate, Representative Kane was successful in securing a \$5,000,000 local funding earmark for a Shrewsbury priority project that she has long advocated for, the rehabilitation and box widening of Route 20 from Route 9 to South Street. She cautioned, however, that this is just the first step in a very long, multi-year process: because the earmarks are funded through bond money and not cash, there is no firm timeline for when the funding might be released, as it must still be worked under the state's annual borrowing cap.

Representative Kane said House Bill 4897 will provide the MBTA with \$400 million to help address some of the safety concerns that have been raised by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The FTA launched a safety management inspection of the MBTA in April following several incidents including a train derailment and the death of a Red Line passenger who was dragged along a platform after his arm was caught in a malfunctioning door as he tried to exit the train.

As part of its preliminary investigation, the FTA has identified four areas of concern that need to be addressed, including staffing levels at the MBTA's operations control center; train yard safety protections; track maintenance delays; and the recertification of the MBTA's workforce. The FTA is expected to complete its report in August.

According to Representative Kane, the House infrastructure bill also provides \$250 million for the East-West Rail, which will provide passenger rail service between Pittsfield and Boston with stops in Springfield, Palmer, and Worcester. The funding can be used for a variety of purposes, including planning, design, permitting and engineering, land acquisition and construction of stations.

House Bill 4897 also establishes a special commission to determine whether the East-West Rail project should be overseen by the creation of a new entity or by using an existing one. The 10-member commission will hold hearings to solicit public testimony and will be required to file a report by December 31, 2022.

Representative Kane noted that House Bill 4897 also contains several policy-related proposals, including:

- an updating of the state's "Dig Safe" laws to require adherence by municipal traffic signal departments;
- a requirement that utility companies working on underground infrastructure conduct periodic audits to ensure the accuracy of the designated location and marking of its facilities and its adherence to marking standards;
- a requirement that the MBTA provide adequate parking alternatives to commuters during the demolition or reconstruction of any MBTA-owned parking lot or parking garage;
- a mandate that the Department of Transportation establish and maintain a searchable website by July 30, 2022 so the public can obtain information on how the funding allocated in this bill is being spent;
- an adjusted reporting requirement of every five years, rather than every year, for cities or towns that receive less than \$25,000 from Transportation Network Companies (TNCs);
- the creation of a special commission on mobility pricing to study and make recommendations on the development and deployment of comprehensive and regionally-equitable public transportation pricing, roadway pricing and congestion pricing, with a report due by July 1, 2023; and
- a directive that the Massachusetts Department of Transportation review the feasibility of extending the use of the Southeast Expressway breakdown lane during the months of May through September, inclusive, to alleviate traffic to and from Cape Cod.

The MassTRAC bill now moves to the Senate for its consideration.

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