

BANKER & TRADESMAN

THE REAL ESTATE, BANKING AND COMMERCIAL WEEKLY FOR MASSACHUSETTS

A PUBLICATION OF THE WARREN GROUP

INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

Better Transportation Access Key To Development In Greater Boston

Interconnected Region Means Increasing Competitiveness

BY RICK DIMINO
SPECIAL TO BANKER & TRADESMAN

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation started the new year with the release of the first draft of the five year capital investment plan. This plan sets the priorities for transportation infrastructure improvements and expansion for the state. These investments are critical to ensuring that Boston, and Massachusetts, remains economically competitive as we move forward in the 21st century.



RICK DIMINO

By completing these projects set forth, Massachusetts takes a necessary step to cement the strong foundation needed for growth and innovation.

In the report, a number of the priorities include projects that will ensure our infrastructure is in a state of good repair. New vehicles for the Red Line, the Orange Line, and, eventually, the Green Line will give our MBTA fleets a much needed upgrade and will also increase the overall efficiency of the system, reducing delays caused by disabled cars. In addition to replacing old cars with newer models, right-of-way systems will be upgraded. The current decades-old systems also cause significant delays on the T. New energy efficiency measures, improved power distribution, and updated signal systems and tracks will lessen delays and also allow trains to be run more frequently.

In addition to repairing and updating the current transit system, the plan also includes

significant commitment to expanding the Boston metro transit system. The Green Line extension project, planned for since the Central Artery/ Tunnel Project, is set to be completed by 2020. Extending the Green Line into Somerville and Medford will link the neighboring cities and strengthen the Boston metro area. Plans were also released for the creation of the Indigo Line running along the Fairmont Commuter Rail corridor in Boston. In the future, the Indigo Line service will connect Boston, Chelsea, and the North Shore. The Indigo line will use diesel multiple unit vehicles. The state is also planning to expand the Silver Line to Chelsea, another link that will strengthen the connections of all the cities in the region and serve a population in need of better transit service.

Commuter Rail Expansion

Other transit funds will improve transit access for across the state. The South Station expansion project is also receiving funds to move the project forward. The long term plan will eventually expand the station, allowing train service to increase in frequency and reliability. Commuter rail trains from MetroWest and Central Massachusetts will benefit from the expansion along with the Amtrak service running along the East Coast, allowing passenger growth on these rail systems in the future. Regional transit authorities, which provide transit for fifteen regions around the state, received funds to purchase new vans for local Councils on Aging, as well as replacing bus fleets and improving regional transit depots.

Highway improvement projects were also included in the plan; the addition of new open road tolling in Allston will help to alleviate the prevalent traffic congestion on that part of the highway. The tolls will coincide with straightening that part of the highway and repairing the viaduct, which is in considerable disrepair. These improvements will also help air quality and also open up land for future development in the Beacon Park rail yard.

These and other investments outlined in the capital plan show that the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, the governor, and Massachusetts legislators realize that the cost of doing nothing to improve our transportation infrastructure is far greater than the cost of these projects. Improving all modes of our transportation systems, roads and transit, improves the region's economy and improves the daily lives of every person who uses these systems. As ambitious as the five-year plan is, it remains the starting point for all of the work that needs to be done for our transportation systems, which will need continuing investment. Boston, the region, and the commonwealth are national leaders in so many industries: healthcare, technology, innovation, tourism, and higher education, to name a few. Investing in our transportation system ensures that we will remain competitive, and continue to be national and international leaders. ■

Rick Dimino is the president and CEO of A Better City. He is also a member of Boston Mayor Marty Walsh's transition team.

Reprinted with permission of Banker & Tradesman.

This document may constitute advertising under the rules of the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts.