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OPINION

TAKING THE LONG VIEW

In Olympics, Boston Has Opportunity For Long-Term Prosperity

Infrastructure Repairs, Updates Must Be Addressed For City To Reach Its Potential

BY RICK DIMINO

SPECIAL TO BANKER & TRADESMAN

This has been an exciting few weeks for Boston and the surrounding region. We recently learned that our city will represent the United States in a bid to host the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and we witnessed the inauguration of a new governor. These exciting times bring with them the opportunity to better position Boston and Massachusetts to retain our competitive edge and ensure continued



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prosperity.

The prospect of hosting the Olympics and bringing the world to Boston in the next decade is thrilling, yet also an enormous undertaking. Hosting an event of this magnitude means that we need a first-class infrastructure capable of transporting athletes, event staff and visitors from every corner of the globe. Boston's ability to host a compact and transit-friendly games was obviously part of its appeal to the United States Olympic Committee, yet we can barely accommodate the already high levels of ridership on the MBTA.

Much of Boston's transit system is either highly congested or operating above its designed capacity. By the time the summer games arrive, our system will already need to accommodate close to 400,000 additional riders each day, and the games will only add to that demand.

The Olympics can certainly be pulled off, but it will require us to get serious about replacing outdated vehicles and making power and signal upgrades that are long overdue and have been discussed for years. New service enhancements, such as an expanded South Station and a new West Station in Allston-Brighton would become even more essential. New modes of service delivery, including Diesel Multiple Units and Bus Rapid Transit, will need to be advanced at a faster pace. As has been well documented by previous state government estimates, the transportation system faces an annual revenue gap of at least \$500 million. Funding these projects and maintaining our system in a state of good repair is imperative, but it is also a real challenge.

In order for us to make the needed investments in our transportation infrastructure, it is important to analyze where our entire system of roads, bridges and public transit stands today and where it needs to go tomorrow. Much has happened in transportation policy over the

past few years, from the landmark Transportation Finance Act of 2013 to the disappointing referendum results which eliminated the indexing of the gas tax to inflation. Under a new administration, now is the time to take stock and plan for the future.

For this reason, A Better City commends Rep. William Straus (D-Mattapoisett) and Sen. Thomas McGee (D-Lynn) for introducing new legislation that asks the Baker administration to evaluate the safety, capacity constraints and financial health of our entire statewide transportation system and to make recommendations for addressing any identified deficiencies. Undertaking an analysis like this will help our new governor set his agenda for transportation policy and communicate to the public the improvements and reforms that are necessary to meet our long-term economic and mobility needs. In new Transportation Secretary Stephanie Pollack, Baker has a leading voice on Massachusetts transportation policy at his disposal. The business community looks forward to working with her and the governor to get the region prepared, not just for the Olympics, but to meet its full economic potential. ■

Rick Dimino is the president and CEO of A Better City.