

Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy Carlos Monje Jr.
Testimony before the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
Subcommittee on Economic Policy

“The Economic Impact of Federal Investments in Massachusetts“

October 20, 2023

Chair Warren and Senator Markey, thank you for the opportunity to testify today and for your leadership and partnership as we work to build a stronger, safer transportation system.

As I speak to you today, the Department of Transportation (DOT) is close to wrapping up the second year of implementing the historic Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). We’ve been hard at work creating new programs and making critical investments in our Nation’s infrastructure. To date, across the Administration we have announced over 38,000 projects across the country. Our transportation investments are making our roads safer for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers; making transit more affordable, reliable, and accessible; and reconnecting communities that have been divided by past transportation decisions. We’re making sure that these new investments are not only resilient against extreme weather, but help combat the climate crisis. And these are not only investments in America’s infrastructure, but also in its workforce, creating hundreds of thousands of good-paying jobs each year in manufacturing, construction, and transportation.

On behalf of Secretary Buttigieg, I’m honored to share with you today some of the ways in which the people of Massachusetts are benefiting from these investments, as well as other areas of the Department’s work.

Safety is the Department’s top priority and in 2022, we committed to an ultimate goal of achieving zero roadway deaths through our National Roadway Safety Strategy. I am pleased to begin by highlighting our safety investments in Massachusetts; after all, Massachusetts consistently ranks as one of the safest states in the nation in terms of fatalities per miles traveled and pedestrian fatalities per capita. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law greatly expanded the resources we’re able to put toward roadway safety in the form of the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) program. To date, we’ve awarded more than \$30 million to 17 communities in Massachusetts. The SS4A program is helping 15 communities across the Commonwealth, including the Cities of Fitchburg, Pittsfield, Southbridge, Ware, and Worcester, to develop comprehensive roadway safety action plans. We’ve awarded \$9 million to Boston to deploy low-cost, high value safety improvements at intersections across the city. And in Springfield, we awarded \$15 million to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists at 15 intersections and along 10 corridors that currently experience a disproportionately high number of fatal crashes. The SS4A program is just one example of how we can continue to work together to make one of the safest states in the nation even safer.

DOT is also hard at work making sure that the transportation sector is central to tackling the **climate** crisis; as the biggest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, transportation must also be a part of the solution. On this front, we’ve made significant investments in Massachusetts.

Most notably, our Federal Transit Administration (FTA) awarded nearly \$220 million the last two years under its BIL-funded Low- and No-Emission and Bus and Bus Facilities programs.

Through these awards, we're helping to replace diesel buses with electric and hybrid buses across the Commonwealth. In Fiscal Year 2022, Massachusetts received more than 10 percent of the total funding from this program, and was second only to California in terms of total funding received. These kinds of investments not only make transit agencies more reliable, but also give transit riders a quieter, more pleasant experience, and communities cleaner air. Moreover, they include efforts to prepare our transportation workforce for these newer technologies, including through apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and instructional training. A good example is the \$6.9 million award provided to the Lowell Regional Transit Authority (LRTA) in June to purchase hybrid-electric buses to replace older vehicles that have reached their useful life and to launch a workforce development program to provide on-the-job and instructional training for the maintenance and operation of hybrid electric vehicles.

As we make investments in the safety and climate impact of our transportation system, we're mindful that the benefits of transportation infrastructure projects must also be done **equitably**. The Department is actively addressing environmental justice and working to undo past harms through the Reconnecting Communities and the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) programs. As part of the Biden Administration's Justice 40 initiative in Massachusetts, the new Reconnecting Communities program is already helping the City of Boston assess the feasibility of reconnecting parts of Chinatown to downtown Boston previously divided by the construction of Interstate 90 (the Mass Pike). Meanwhile, RAISE is funding improvements to transit infrastructure, bridges, and roads in disadvantaged communities in Springfield, Lynn, New Bedford, Brockton, and right here in Lowell, where we're funding the rehabilitation and preservation of four deficient bridges with improvements to pedestrian, bicycle, and transit accommodations.

Lastly, I want to touch on **America's workforce and innovation** as we look toward building for the future. Massachusetts received nearly \$6.5 million from DOT's new BIL-funded Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART) discretionary grant program. In Massachusetts, SMART is funding smart traffic signals in Brockton, planning for smart grids at the Cape Cod Gateway Airport and at MetroWest Regional Transit's headquarters, and improvements to rail safety on Cape Cod using unmanned aircraft systems and smart sensors.

I was also recently here alongside Governor Healey to cut the ribbon on a brand-new facility for DOT's Volpe Center, which will draw on some of the brightest minds to support the work across our Department. This new facility will provide the modern facilities needed to expand advanced transportation research, and house the next generation of the transportation workforce through internships, academic research partnerships, and mentoring programs.

Speaking of academic partnerships, we also recently named UMass Amherst as the lead of our New England University Transportation Center, alongside consortia members from Bunker Hill

Community College, Holyoke Community College, and MIT. We're excited to see how they can help us advance our transportation work particularly in both safety and equity.

In closing, at DOT we see Massachusetts as an example when it comes to demonstrating how transportation infrastructure can be safer, more climate-friendly, and a tool for building communities and encouraging innovation. But we're also encouraged by the Commonwealth's desire to go further to continue investing here in the years to come, to improve the lives of its residents and workers, to support the critical industries that reside here, and to present a model to communities across the Nation.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.