

LETTERS *to the* EDITOR

FEBRUARY 1, 2009

No border-toll war

RATHER THAN drawing the Bay State's neighbors into a toll war ("Patrick queries US on Mass. border toll idea," Metro, Jan. 24), it's time for Governor Patrick to show courage and leadership in calling for an increase in the Massachusetts gasoline tax.

When confronted more than a year ago with a \$19 billion hole in the Commonwealth's 20-year transportation funding, the governor pushed off tough decisions on how to raise new revenues, saying he first wanted to address current inefficiencies. He then spent months wrangling with the Legislature over pulling state troopers off flag duty at road construction sites. What will this much-disputed measure save? About \$7 million a year.

Raising the gas tax by 20 cents a gallon would generate about \$640 million a year in new revenues, addressing transit priorities while helping our fiscally strapped cities and towns carry out urgently needed road and bridge repairs. For a commuter driving 20 miles in a car that gets 20 miles per gallon, that's a 20-cent surcharge per ride — far less than drivers pay at Massachusetts highway tollbooths.

Why not let all Massachusetts drivers share modestly in funding our state's transportation needs, rather than singling out a fraction of drivers — those seeking to cross the state's borders — for a disproportionate burden?

PHILIP WARBURG

Newton