

## **Commitment is there for funding**

July 1, 2008

THERE IS no question about the need to ramp up investment in Massachusetts transportation infrastructure, as you stated in your June 24 editorial "[Mass. moves - badly](#)." However, far from making "only a down payment," as you described, the Patrick-Murray administration and the Legislature in the past 18 months have worked toward committing a total of more than \$9 billion to road and bridge and transit projects.

Within months of taking office last year, Governor Patrick presented, and the Legislature approved, a nearly \$1.5 billion "immediate needs" bond bill that included funds for state and local road and bridge construction. This followed recent years during which funding for transportation infrastructure severely lagged.

In April, the governor signed a three-year transportation bond bill that will invest \$3.5 billion in federal and state money. Another bond bill now working its way through the legislative process would add \$1.3 billion in state dollars over three years. And now, the governor has advocated for a \$3 billion, eight-year accelerated bridge repair program.

Along with this significant increase in transportation investment compared to recent years, Governor Patrick has ordered the transportation community to find efficiencies through reform and identify cost savings, so that citizens will be assured we are spending dollars wisely.

*BERNARD COHEN, Massachusetts secretary of transportation, Boston ■*

## **Three problems to reckon with**

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YOUR EDITORIAL "[Mass. moves - badly](#)" is indeed a sad commentary on the state of our transportation infrastructure. There are no surprises in the report of the Massachusetts Transportation Investment Coalition. You are right in writing that the funding gap "hasn't yet registered with the average citizen." However, even those who understand that there is a serious problem are unwilling to pay for the remedy.

There are three problems that need to be reckoned with.

First, our political leaders are unwilling to take the risk of proposing any type of new taxes. We are willing to accept hefty gasoline price increases imposed by the oil cartel, albeit not happily; but will fight tooth and nail a gas tax increase of even a few cents to pay for repairs to our deteriorating bridges and transit systems.

Second, we are facing a serious shortage of civil engineers, and the situation is likely to worsen. This shortage will affect both public and private sectors, and will weaken infrastructure policy development and implementation.

Third, financing options are extremely limited. Private financing of public infrastructure is not attractive to the private sector. However, hybrid financing plans that combine public and private dollars may offer the best hope for certain types of projects.

*M. ILYAS BHATTI, Plainville*

*The writer, a professional engineer, served on the Metropolitan District Commission from 1989 to 1995. ■*