

December 9, 2008

Hon. Deval Patrick
Governor
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Massachusetts State House
Room 360
Boston MA 02133

Dear Governor Patrick:

As the Executive Director of the Salem Chamber of Commerce, I am writing to you on behalf of 550 members, to voice our opposition to the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority's proposed toll increases because they single-out and inflict disproportionate harm on the residents and businesses of our region. We urge you to freeze any toll increases until a comprehensive statewide transportation plan is completed that presents a fair solution for all regions.

Thousands of Salem residents commute to Boston each day. At the same time our businesses, colleges and non-profits businesses draw their workforce and students from Boston. Each will pay far more to commute to their place of work or school than residents of other regions. The clients and suppliers of our robust business community will incur much greater costs. The ramifications of this imbalanced toll increase, especially during a recession, will be a decrease in business revenues on the North Shore (and therefore state tax revenues) and an increase in unemployment in our region, further burdening the Commonwealth.

We understand the severity of the crisis facing the Turnpike Authority. We do not understand, support or agree with a solution that penalizes one region over another. This is a burden we all need to share. We support a comprehensive state transportation plan that might include any of an array of solutions such as an increase in the gasoline tax, HOV tolling, privatization, a new airport tax and other remedies. The Commonwealth needs a solid, equitable, long-term solution to the transportation problems facing us. The toll increase is inequitable, short-term and unsatisfactory. We urge that you work with the legislature to craft the long-term solution and freeze any toll hikes the interim.

Sincerely,

Rinus Oosthoek
Executive Director