

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 2653**

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

PRESENTED BY:

*Andres X. Vargas and Adrian C. Madaro*

*To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:*

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act relative to regional transportation ballot initiatives.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
<i>Andres X. Vargas</i>	<i>3rd Essex</i>	<i>1/14/2019</i>
<i>Adrian C. Madaro</i>	<i>1st Suffolk</i>	<i>3/19/2019</i>
<i>Jack Patrick Lewis</i>	<i>7th Middlesex</i>	<i>1/22/2019</i>
<i>Jason M. Lewis</i>	<i>Fifth Middlesex</i>	<i>1/23/2019</i>
<i>Carlos González</i>	<i>10th Hampden</i>	<i>1/25/2019</i>
<i>Mike Connolly</i>	<i>26th Middlesex</i>	<i>1/25/2019</i>
<i>Jonathan Hecht</i>	<i>29th Middlesex</i>	<i>1/29/2019</i>
<i>Christine P. Barber</i>	<i>34th Middlesex</i>	<i>1/29/2019</i>
<i>David M. Rogers</i>	<i>24th Middlesex</i>	<i>1/29/2019</i>
<i>Brian M. Ashe</i>	<i>2nd Hampden</i>	<i>1/29/2019</i>
<i>Jennifer E. Benson</i>	<i>37th Middlesex</i>	<i>1/29/2019</i>
<i>Natalie M. Blais</i>	<i>1st Franklin</i>	<i>1/30/2019</i>
<i>William L. Crocker, Jr.</i>	<i>2nd Barnstable</i>	<i>1/30/2019</i>
<i>Marjorie C. Decker</i>	<i>25th Middlesex</i>	<i>1/30/2019</i>
<i>Antonio F. D. Cabral</i>	<i>13th Bristol</i>	<i>1/30/2019</i>
<i>Thomas M. Stanley</i>	<i>9th Middlesex</i>	<i>1/30/2019</i>
<i>James B. Eldridge</i>	<i>Middlesex and Worcester</i>	<i>1/30/2019</i>
<i>Carmine Lawrence Gentile</i>	<i>13th Middlesex</i>	<i>1/30/2019</i>

<i>Tommy Vitolo</i>	<i>15th Norfolk</i>	<i>1/30/2019</i>
<i>James Arciero</i>	<i>2nd Middlesex</i>	<i>1/31/2019</i>
<i>Michael J. Barrett</i>	<i>Third Middlesex</i>	<i>2/1/2019</i>
<i>David Biele</i>	<i>4th Suffolk</i>	<i>2/1/2019</i>
<i>Joseph A. Boncore</i>	<i>First Suffolk and Middlesex</i>	<i>2/1/2019</i>
<i>Michelle L. Ciccolo</i>	<i>15th Middlesex</i>	<i>2/1/2019</i>
<i>Edward F. Coppinger</i>	<i>10th Suffolk</i>	<i>1/31/2019</i>
<i>Daniel R. Cullinane</i>	<i>12th Suffolk</i>	<i>2/1/2019</i>
<i>Julian Cyr</i>	<i>Cape and Islands</i>	<i>2/1/2019</i>
<i>Michael S. Day</i>	<i>31st Middlesex</i>	<i>1/31/2019</i>
<i>Sal N. DiDomenico</i>	<i>Middlesex and Suffolk</i>	<i>1/31/2019</i>
<i>Mindy Domb</i>	<i>3rd Hampshire</i>	<i>1/31/2019</i>
<i>Sean Garballey</i>	<i>23rd Middlesex</i>	<i>2/1/2019</i>
<i>Tami L. Gouveia</i>	<i>14th Middlesex</i>	<i>2/1/2019</i>
<i>James K. Hawkins</i>	<i>2nd Bristol</i>	<i>1/31/2019</i>
<i>Natalie M. Higgins</i>	<i>4th Worcester</i>	<i>2/1/2019</i>
<i>Patricia D. Jehlen</i>	<i>Second Middlesex</i>	<i>2/1/2019</i>
<i>Kay Khan</i>	<i>11th Middlesex</i>	<i>2/1/2019</i>
<i>Elizabeth A. Malia</i>	<i>11th Suffolk</i>	<i>2/1/2019</i>
<i>Christina A. Minicucci</i>	<i>14th Essex</i>	<i>1/31/2019</i>
<i>Liz Miranda</i>	<i>5th Suffolk</i>	<i>1/31/2019</i>
<i>Michael J. Moran</i>	<i>18th Suffolk</i>	<i>2/1/2019</i>
<i>Brian W. Murray</i>	<i>10th Worcester</i>	<i>2/1/2019</i>
<i>Harold P. Naughton, Jr.</i>	<i>12th Worcester</i>	<i>1/31/2019</i>
<i>Rebecca L. Rausch</i>	<i>Norfolk, Bristol and Middlesex</i>	<i>2/1/2019</i>
<i>Maria Duaine Robinson</i>	<i>6th Middlesex</i>	<i>2/1/2019</i>
<i>Daniel J. Ryan</i>	<i>2nd Suffolk</i>	<i>1/31/2019</i>
<i>Lindsay N. Sabadosa</i>	<i>1st Hampshire</i>	<i>1/31/2019</i>
<i>Jon Santiago</i>	<i>9th Suffolk</i>	<i>1/31/2019</i>
<i>John C. Velis</i>	<i>4th Hampden</i>	<i>1/31/2019</i>

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 2653**

By Messrs. Vargas of Haverhill and Madaro of Boston, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 2653) of Andres X. Vargas, Adrian C. Madaro and others for legislation to authorize municipalities to assess certain taxes for financing regional transportation needs and investments. Revenue.

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

**In the One Hundred and Ninety-First General Court  
(2019-2020)**

An Act relative to regional transportation ballot initiatives.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:*

1 The General Laws are hereby amended by inserting after chapter 64M the following  
2 chapter:-

3 CHAPTER 64N.

4 LOCAL AND REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION BALLOT INITIATIVES.

5 Section 1. For purposes of this chapter, the following terms shall have the following  
6 meanings unless the context clearly requires otherwise:

7 “District agreement”, a document specifying the terms and conditions of the powers and  
8 duties of the 2 or more municipalities forming a district under section 4 of this chapter, pursuant  
9 to the laws governing any such municipality, this chapter and such procedural regulations as the  
10 commissioner of revenue may promulgate.

11 “Governing body”, in a city having a Plan D or Plan E charter the city manager and city  
12 council and in any other city the mayor and the city council and in towns the board of selectmen  
13 or equivalent body.

14 “Single subject of taxation”, 1 tax mechanism, including, sales, real or personal property,  
15 room occupancy, vehicle excise, or any other tax then authorized to be assessed or collected by  
16 the commonwealth or any city or town, as determined annually by the board of assessors or  
17 department of revenue, that the city or town, or district, may subject to the tax surcharge.

18 “Transportation project”, a project or program involving the planning, design or  
19 construction of public or mass transportation transit systems, transit oriented development, roads,  
20 bridges, bikeways, pedestrian pathways, and other transportation-related projects.

21 Section 2. (a) This chapter shall take effect in any city or town upon the approval of its  
22 governing body and its acceptance by the voters of any city or town by a ballot question as set  
23 forth in section 3.

24 (b) A city or town may impose any tax surcharge within its city or town on a single  
25 subject of taxation subject only to the condition that such tax is a surcharge on a tax then  
26 authorized by state law; provided, however, that no tax surcharge shall be imposed within the  
27 city or town unless it has first been approved by the governing body of such city and town and  
28 accepted by a majority of the voters of a city or town through a ballot question as set forth in  
29 section 3, except as provided in section 4.

30 (c) Notwithstanding chapters 59, 60A, 64H, 62 or any other general or special law to the  
31 contrary but subject this chapter, the governing body of any city or town may vote to accept the  
32 provisions of this chapter authorizing a surcharge on a single subject of taxation, as determined

33 annually by the board of assessors or department of revenue. A governing body that intends to  
34 accept the provisions of this chapter shall determine prior to approval by the voters which single  
35 subject of taxation will be levied and the amount and rate of surcharge. For a real or personal  
36 property tax surcharge, the amount of the surcharge shall not be included in a calculation of total  
37 taxes assessed for purposes of section 21C of chapter 59.

38 (d) All exemptions and abatements of any single subject of taxation for which a taxpayer  
39 qualifies as eligible shall not be affected by this chapter. A taxpayer receiving an exemption for  
40 any single subject of taxation shall be exempt from any tax surcharge on any single subject of  
41 taxation established under this section. The tax surcharge to be paid by a taxpayer receiving an  
42 abatement of any single subject of taxation shall be reduced in proportion to the amount of such  
43 abatement.

44 (e) Any amount of the tax surcharge not paid by the due date shall bear interest at the rate  
45 per annum as authorized by the law for any single subject of taxation.

46 (f) Revenues raised through the tax surcharge shall be separately accounted for and used  
47 by the city or town for transportation projects.

48 Section 3. (a) Upon approval by the governing body, the actions of the governing body  
49 shall be submitted for acceptance to the voters of a city or town at the next regular municipal or  
50 state election. The city or town clerk or the state secretary shall place it on the ballot in the form  
51 of the following question: "Shall this (city or town) accept sections 2 to 5, inclusive of chapter  
52 64N of the General Laws, as approved by its (governing body), a summary of which appears  
53 below

54 (Set forth here a fair, concise summary and purpose of the law to be acted upon, as  
55 determined by the city solicitor or town counsel, including in the summary the specific single  
56 subject of taxation to be levied and percentage of the surcharge to be imposed.)”

57 In the ballot question, the city or town may include a list of specific transportation  
58 projects for which the tax surcharge funds may be used, or a city or town may include a general  
59 description of the types of transportation projects for which the tax surcharge may be used. The  
60 city or town may also include a sunset provision in the ballot question, but the authorization for  
61 the tax surcharge shall not exceed 30 years.

62 If a majority of the voters voting on said question vote in the affirmative, then its  
63 provisions shall take effect in the city or town, or district as set forth under section 4, but not  
64 otherwise.

65 (b) The final date for notifying or filing a petition with the city or town clerk or the state  
66 secretary to place such a question on the ballot shall be 60 days before the city or town election  
67 or 100 days before the state election. For those petitions that will appear on the state election,  
68 notice shall be given by filing with the state secretary a certified copy of the governing body’s  
69 approval, and include a copy of the summary set forth in subsection (a).

70 (c) If the governing body does not vote to accept the provisions of this chapter, not less  
71 than 120 days before a regular city or town election or 180 days before a state election, a  
72 question seeking said acceptance through approval of a particular surcharge amount and  
73 percentage may be so placed on the ballot when a petition including information about the  
74 subject of taxation, rate of taxation and project or types of projects is signed by not less than 5  
75 per cent of the registered voters of the city or town requesting such action is filed with the

76 registrars, who shall have 7 days after receipt of such petition to certify its signatures. Upon  
77 certification of the signatures, the city or town clerk or the state secretary shall cause the question  
78 to be placed on the ballot at the next regular city or town election held more than 60 days after  
79 such certification or at the next regular state election held more than 90 days after such  
80 certification.

81           Section 4. (a) Two or more municipalities may, with the approval of the governing body  
82 of each city or town thereof, form a district for the purposes of implementing the provisions of  
83 this chapter.

84           (b) If a majority of the voters in the district, for the purposes set forth in subsection (a),  
85 vote on said question in the affirmative then the provisions of this chapter shall take effect in the  
86 district, but not otherwise.

87           (c) Two or more municipalities that choose to form a district for purposes of this chapter  
88 shall apply a tax surcharge to their preferred subject of taxation. The amount and percentage of  
89 the tax surcharge may vary for each municipality that comprises the district.

90           (d) Two or more municipalities forming a district shall adopt a district agreement with  
91 approval of the applicable governing body prior to presentment to the voters of the 2 or more  
92 municipalities by a ballot question. The district agreement shall specify: (i) the purpose and  
93 nature of the arrangement; (ii) the single municipality to serve as the treasurer of the  
94 transportation fund or the regional planning agency to serve as fiscal agent of the transportation  
95 fund under section 7 and that said municipality or regional planning agency shall also serve as  
96 treasurer or fiscal agent for purposes of section 9; (iii) how the transportation fund will be used  
97 and for what purposes, and how the municipalities will decide on details of use, plan changes or

98 urgent circumstances; (iv) the work to be performed, and the division or sharing of responsibility  
99 among the municipalities; (v) the estimated costs and the methods of financing of the  
100 transportation projects; (vi) the method of administration of the transportation fund and the  
101 transportation projects to be paid for through the fund; (vii) the composition of the district's  
102 transportation committee, the length of its term, and the criteria and method of selecting its  
103 members; (viii) the duration of the proposed agreement; and (ix) the amount, type and  
104 percentage of the tax surcharge for each municipality that comprises the district.

105 (f) Nothing in this section shall be construed to: (i) amend, repeal or otherwise alter the  
106 authority or jurisdiction of, or establish, a municipality; or (ii) confer any management authority  
107 over transportation projects beyond the authority exercised by participating municipalities in the  
108 district agreement set forth in this section and this chapter.

109 Section 5. (a) Upon acceptance of this chapter, the satisfaction of the requirements of this  
110 chapter and upon the assessors' warrant to the tax collector, the accepted tax surcharge shall be  
111 imposed. The city, town, or district, shall notify the commissioner of revenue of the date and  
112 terms on which the voters accepted this chapter.

113 (b) For a tax surcharge levied on either property or excise tax, after receipt of the warrant,  
114 the tax collector shall collect the surcharge in the amount and according to the computation  
115 specified in the warrant and shall pay the amounts so collected, quarterly or semi-annually,  
116 according to the schedule for collection of the single subject of taxation, to the city's or town's  
117 treasurer, or the district's treasurer. The tax collector shall cause appropriate books and accounts  
118 to be kept with respect to such tax surcharge, which shall be subject to public examination upon  
119 reasonable request from time to time.

120 (c) Two or more municipalities forming a district shall select one of the municipalities or  
121 the regional planning agency to serve as the district's treasurer for purposes of this chapter. The  
122 district agreement shall establish the method of selecting the district treasurer. The municipality  
123 or regional planning agency selected to serve as district treasurer shall perform duties in  
124 accordance with section 5 of this chapter and chapter 41. Two or more municipalities forming a  
125 district shall also select that same municipality or regional planning agency to receive funds and  
126 provide certification for all municipalities within said district for purposes of section 9 and in  
127 accordance with section 4.

128 Section 6. (a) A city or town that accepts this chapter, either on its own or as part of a  
129 district, shall establish by ordinance or by-law and, in the case of a district, the ordinance or by-  
130 law shall be established by all member municipalities, a transportation committee not more than  
131 90 days following acceptance of this chapter. The committee shall consist of not less than 5  
132 members. The ordinance or by-law shall determine the composition of the committee, the length  
133 of its term and the criteria and method of selecting its members by appointment only. The  
134 committee shall include, but not be limited to, 1 or more representatives from the municipality, 1  
135 member of each regional transit authority to which the city or town is a member community, if  
136 any, 1 member of the regional planning agency to which the city or town is a member  
137 community and persons, as determined by the ordinance or by-law, acting in the capacity of or  
138 performing like duties of the department, board or authority if they have not been established in  
139 the city or town.

140 (b) Each transportation committee shall study the transportation-related needs,  
141 possibilities, and resources of the city, town or district. The committee shall consult with existing  
142 transportation agencies, including regional planning agencies, to develop transportation projects

143 in accordance with the ballot initiative. If a list of transportation projects for which the tax  
144 surcharge funds may be used was included in a ballot question, the committee shall include said  
145 projects in its study; provided, however, that the committee may recommend or not recommend  
146 said projects.

147 (c) Each transportation committee shall be subject to the requirements of subsection (a)  
148 of section 19 of chapter 30A. Each transportation committee shall keep a full and accurate  
149 account of all of its actions, including its recommendations and the action taken on them and  
150 records of all appropriations or expenditures made from the Local and Regional Transportation  
151 Fund. The records and accounts of the committee shall be public records.

152 (d) Each city, town or district, as applicable, shall consult with entity proposed to own  
153 and maintain the transportation project prior to listing any transportation project on the ballot as  
154 set forth in this chapter. If a city, town or district, as applicable, includes no specific  
155 transportation projects in the ballot question, the transportation committee shall receive the  
156 approval of the regional planning agency prior to submitting the local transportation committee's  
157 recommendations to a city council or board of selectmen, unless the transportation-related  
158 project or activity is solely under local jurisdiction. The city, town, or district shall study projects  
159 that promote access to public transportation, biking, and walking.

160 (e) Not less than once every 2 fiscal years, each transportation committee shall make  
161 recommendations to the governing body of the applicable city or town or to the district regarding  
162 efficient and effective ways to improve and enhance local transportation systems in such city,  
163 town or district. Recommendations to the governing body or district shall include anticipated  
164 costs over the life cycle of the transportation project. The committee may include in its

165 recommendation to the governing body or district a recommendation to set aside for later  
166 spending funds for specific purposes that are consistent with transportation-related purposes but  
167 for which sufficient revenues are not currently available in the Local and Regional  
168 Transportation Fund, as set forth in section 7, to accomplish that specific purpose, to satisfy debt  
169 payments incurred from transportation-related projects or to set aside for later spending funds for  
170 general purposes that are consistent with transportation improvements and in accordance with the  
171 ballot initiative.

172 (f) After receiving such recommendations from the transportation committee, the  
173 governing body or district shall take such action and approve such appropriations from the Local  
174 and Regional Transportation Fund as may be necessary and appropriate for the recommendations  
175 of the transportation committee, and such additional appropriations as it deems appropriate to  
176 carry out the recommendations of the transportation committee and in accordance with the ballot  
177 initiative.

178 Section 7. (a) Notwithstanding section 53 of chapter 44 or any other general or special  
179 law to the contrary, a city, town or district that accepts the provisions of this chapter shall  
180 establish a separate account to be known as the Local and Regional Transportation Fund, of  
181 which the municipal treasurer or fiscal agent shall be the custodian. The authority to approve  
182 expenditures from the fund shall be limited to the governing body or any city or town, or the  
183 designated municipality treasurer or regional planning agency of the district, as applicable, and  
184 the municipal treasurer or fiscal agent shall pay such expenditures in accordance with chapter 41.

185 (b) Two or more municipalities forming a district shall select 1 of the municipalities or  
186 regional planning agency to establish a separate account known as the Local and Regional

187 Transportation Fund. The municipality or regional planning agency selected to establish said  
188 fund shall only use the funds for the district as a whole through the designated fiscal agent and  
189 based solely upon the recommendations and approvals of the transportation committee as set  
190 forth in this chapter. Administration of the fund by the fiscal agent may, at the option of the  
191 governing body of any member city or town, be subject to the further approval of such governing  
192 body.

193 (c) The following monies shall be deposited in the Local and Regional Transportation  
194 Fund: (i) all funds collected from the tax surcharge on any single subject of taxation pursuant to  
195 section 3, except if the single subject of taxation is a tax collected at the state level which shall be  
196 deposited with the department of revenue in accordance with sections 8 and 9; and (ii) all funds  
197 received from the commonwealth or any other source for such purposes. The treasurer or fiscal  
198 agent may deposit or invest the proceeds of the fund in savings banks, trust companies  
199 incorporated under the laws of the commonwealth, banking companies incorporated under the  
200 laws of the commonwealth that are members of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation or  
201 national banks, or may invest the proceeds in paid up shares and accounts of and in co-operative  
202 banks or in shares of savings and loan associations or in shares of federal savings and loan  
203 associations doing business in the commonwealth or in the manner authorized by section 54 of  
204 chapter 44 and any income therefrom shall be credited to the fund. The expenditure of revenues  
205 from the fund shall be limited to implementing the recommendations of the transportation  
206 committees, to providing administrative and operating expenses to the committees, and in  
207 accordance with the ballot initiative. The city or town, or the municipality treasurer or regional  
208 planning agency of the district as set forth in section 4, shall be prohibited from diverting  
209 revenues derived from the tax surcharge into any other fund created by law or ordinance.

210 (d) Only those cities and towns or districts that adopt the tax surcharge allowed by this  
211 chapter shall be eligible to receive monies through the Local and Regional Transportation Fund.

212 Section 8. (a) There shall be established and set up on the books of the commonwealth a  
213 separate fund, to be known as the Massachusetts Local and Regional Transportation Trust Fund,  
214 for the benefit of cities, towns, or districts that have accepted the provisions of this chapter and  
215 have imposed a tax surcharge on a tax collected by the commonwealth, subject to any  
216 exemptions adopted by a municipality or district. The fund shall consist of all revenues received  
217 by the commonwealth: (i) from the tax surcharge on such tax pursuant to section 3; (ii) from  
218 public and private sources as gifts, grants and donations to further local or regional transportation  
219 projects; and (iii) all other monies credited to or transferred to from any other fund or source  
220 pursuant to law.

221 (b) The state treasurer shall deposit revenues received by any such tax surcharge into the  
222 fund in accordance with section 9 in such manner as will secure the highest interest rate available  
223 consistent with the safety of the fund and with the requirement that all amounts on deposit be  
224 available for withdrawal without penalty for such withdrawal at any time. All interest accrued  
225 and earnings shall be deposited into the fund. The fund shall be administered in a manner to  
226 separately account for revenues raised by each city, town, or district, shall be held for the benefit  
227 of such city, town, or district, and expenditures from the fund shall be made solely for the  
228 administration and implementation of this chapter. Any unexpended balances shall be  
229 redeposited for future use by the city, town, or district consistent with this chapter.

230 (c) The state treasurer shall make all disbursements and expenditures from the fund  
231 without further appropriation, as directed by the commissioner of revenue in accordance with

232 section 9. The department of revenue shall report by source all amounts credited to said fund and  
233 all expenditures from said fund. The commissioner of revenue shall assign personnel of the  
234 department as it may need to administer and manage the fund disbursements and any expense  
235 incurred by the department shall be deemed an operating and administrative expense of the  
236 program. The operating and administrative expenses shall not exceed 5 per cent of the annual  
237 total revenue deposited into the fund.

238 Section 9. (a) All sums received by the commissioner under this chapter shall, not less  
239 than quarterly, be distributed, credited and paid by the state treasurer upon certification of the  
240 commissioner to each city or town or the municipality treasurer or regional planning agency of  
241 the district and notified the commissioner of their acceptance.

242 (b) The state treasurer, upon certification of the commissioner, shall distribute the funds  
243 to the city or town, or the municipality treasurer or regional planning agency of the district based  
244 on the proportional amount the city, town or district has raised by imposing the surcharge. The  
245 total distribution of funds shall include all sources of revenue raised in the previous year as set  
246 forth in subsection (a) of section 8, less not more than 5 per cent of the annual total revenue of  
247 the fund, as set forth in subsection (c) of section 8. Any city, town or district seeking to dispute  
248 the commissioner's calculation of its distribution under this subsection shall notify the  
249 commissioner, in writing, not later than 1 year from the date the tax was distributed by the  
250 commissioner to the city, town or district.

251 (c) The commissioner shall be prohibited from diverting revenues derived from the tax  
252 surcharge into any other fund created by law.

253 (d) Notwithstanding any provision to the contrary, the commissioner may make available  
254 to cities, towns and districts any information necessary for administration of the tax surcharge  
255 imposed by this chapter including, but not limited to, a report of the amount of the surcharge on  
256 tax collected in the aggregate by each city, town or district under this chapter in the preceding  
257 fiscal year, and the identification of each individual vendor collecting the surcharge on sales tax  
258 collected under this chapter.

259 Section 10. (a) At any time after imposition of the tax surcharge, the governing body of  
260 each city or town may approve and the voters may accept an amendment to the amount and  
261 computation of the tax surcharge in the same manner and subject to the same requirements set  
262 forth in this chapter.

263 (b) At any time after imposition of the tax surcharge, a district under section 4, with the  
264 approval of the majority of voters in the district may accept an amendment to the amount and  
265 computation of the tax surcharge in the same manner and subject to the same requirements set  
266 forth in this chapter so that the surcharge becomes uniform in all municipalities of the district.

267 Section 11. The commissioner of revenue shall have the authority to promulgate rules and  
268 regulations to effect the purposes of this chapter.