



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
House of Representatives
State House, Boston 02133-1054

TODD M. SMOLA
REPRESENTATIVE
1ST HAMPDEN DISTRICT

STATE HOUSE, ROOM 124
TEL. (617) 722-2100
FAX: (617) 722-2390

www.reptoddsmla.org
Todd.Smola@mahouse.gov
Conor.Welch@mahouse.gov

BRIMFIELD • HOLLAND • PALMER
STURBRIDGE • WALES • WARE • WARREN

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Contact: Conor Welch
617-722-2100

Representative Smola supports bill providing state financial assistance for municipal roads and bridges

BOSTON – Representative Todd M. Smola (R-Warren, Ranking Member, Committee on Ways & Means) joined with his colleagues today to support legislation that will help cities and towns address critical infrastructure needs.

House Bill 4424, *An Act financing improvements to municipal roads and bridges*, includes \$50 million in funding for a new Small Bridge Program and streamlines the Complete Streets Program to encourage more communities to apply for funding assistance for local road projects. It also authorizes \$750 million in new highway spending, which will be used to leverage additional federal dollars.

“Maintaining local roads and bridges is a costly but necessary expense,” said Representative Smola. “The bill passed by the House today represents a significant investment of state resources that will help our cities and towns improve the safety and reliability of their infrastructure.”

The Small Bridge Program is designed specifically to reimburse communities for repairing or replacing structurally-deficient smaller bridges – measuring 20 feet or less in length – that are located on municipal roadways but do not qualify for federal funding assistance. Approximately 1,300 bridges statewide fall into this category.

The bill funds the Small Bridge Program at \$10 million a year for 5 years. Funding awarded through this competitive grant program can be used to cover design, construction and administrative costs. In addition to capping the maximum funding available to a single municipality at \$500,000 per year, the bill also prohibits the

Massachusetts Department of Transportation from allocating more than 20% of funds to any one highway district.

Under the Small Bridge Program, participating municipalities will be responsible for administering local bridge projects through the design and construction phases, including the procurement of a designer as well as the bidding and oversight of the construction contract. The municipality will also be responsible for obtaining all environmental permits, coordinating with affected utility companies, and securing required rights of way.

Representative Smola noted that the bill also updates the Complete Street Program by changing it from a certificate program to a grant program. This change is designed to make it easier for communities to access funding through the program, which can be used for municipal roadway improvements such as new crosswalks, enhanced street lighting, timing changes to traffic signals and the creation of designated bike lanes.

Established in 2014, the Complete Streets Program is designed to promote safe and accessible roadways for people of all ages and abilities, whether they walk, bike, use public transit or drive a motor vehicle.

The bill now heads to the Senate for further action. For additional information please contact Representative Smola at Todd.Smola@mahouse.gov or (617)722-2100.

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