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Rep. Smola Supports \$1.295 Billion Bond Bill to Help Communities Adapt to Climate Change

BOSTON – Representative Todd M. Smola (R-Warren, Ranking Member, Committee on Ways & Means) is backing legislation authorizing \$1.295 billion in state grants for cities and towns to invest in climate change adaptation and infrastructure improvements.

House Bill 3987, An Act relative to GreenWorks, passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 158-0 on July 24. In addition to establishing a GreenWorks Infrastructure Program in the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, it also creates a series of grant programs overseen by the Department of Energy Resources to assist communities with climate change resiliency issues.

The bill authorizes \$1 billion in bond funding for the GreenWorks Infrastructure Program. Grants from this program will be made available to cities and towns beginning on or before September 1, 2020, when the state's first open solicitation period for grant applications will begin. Grants will be allocated for projects located on public lands or a public right-of-way that improve climate adaption and resiliency, mitigate climate change impacts, reduce carbon emissions, and promote energy efficiency.

Ten percent of the available grant funding each year will be set aside for towns with populations of 7,000 or fewer residents. These towns will be eligible to receive one grant every three fiscal years, capped at \$1 million. Two or more eligible towns can submit a joint application for funding to cover a single regional project, subject to the same limitations.

The bill also provides for an additional \$295 million in targeted investments, including:

- a \$100 million matching grant program to help cities and towns deploy municipal microgrid energy systems;
- a \$125 million grant program to encourage municipalities and regional transit authorities to convert their fleets to electric vehicles;
- a \$20 million grant program for municipalities to hire sustainability coordinators to implement and monitor projects awarded funding under the GreenWorks Infrastructure Program; and
- \$50 million to establish a Green Resiliency Fund to provide matching funds for GreenWorks projects, resiliency improvements and resiliency investments.

In addition, the bill directs the Department of Energy Resources to study the feasibility of utilizing electric vehicles on existing public transportation routes and how those routes could be modified to provide equivalent service with electric vehicles; the contracted use of privately-owned vehicle fleets by municipalities and opportunities for expanding the use of electric vehicles; and the environmental and economic benefits of replacing existing vehicles with electric vehicles.

The GreenWorks 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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