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Senate OKs \$1.4 billion bond bill
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A House-Senate panel will now approve a compromise bill that will be sent to Gov. Deval L. Patrick.

BOSTON - The Massachusetts Senate yesterday approved a \$1.4 billion transportation bond bill that provides money for roads, transit centers, airports and commuter rail in the state.

In Western Massachusetts, the bill has \$15 million for improving Westover Metropolitan Airport in Chicopee, \$10 million for rebuilding Boston Road in Springfield and money for extending a commuter rail from Hartford to Springfield.

Sen. Gale D. Candaras, D-Wilbraham, said Boston Road - the largest retail corridor in Springfield - is in serious need of repairs and new lights.

She said the \$10 million will pay for an overhaul of Boston Road that will ease traffic congestion and improve safety for pedestrians.

"This section of Boston Road is one of the most important economic corridors in Springfield and the entire Pioneer Valley," Candaras stated.

The state House of Representatives approved a similar bond bill on June 11.

A House-Senate panel will now approve a compromise bill that will be sent to Gov. Deval L. Patrick.

The Senate bond bill includes money for road and bridge projects for the next five years.

It includes \$350 million for Chapter 90 grants to cities and towns for road work, \$10 million in grants for road and bridge projects in towns with populations of 7,000 or less, \$50 million in grants for communities with transportation projects considered vital for economic development and \$40 million for improving airports.

Both the House and Senate versions of the bill include an unspecified amount of money for a proposed commuter rail line between Springfield, Hartford and New Haven.

Rebecca M. Townsend of Longmeadow, president of the Pioneer Valley Advocates for Commuter Rail, said she was very pleased.

"It shows that the entire Legislature is behind this one regional project," she said.

Sen. Stanley C. Rosenberg, D-Amherst, authored a portion of the bill that clears the state to apply for federal money provided to states that use state money for major improvements on toll roads such as the Massachusetts Turnpike.

Rosenberg said the state has not attempted to collect such "toll credits" for many years. "This is essentially found money," Rosenberg stated.

The bill also directs the state Executive Office of Transportation to provide state money in advance for regional transit authorities around the state, according to Sen. Stephen M. Brewer,

D-Barre. Currently, the 15 authorities are reimbursed by the state for services provided in the prior fiscal year.

The current method forces transit authorities to borrow for current operations and then use state reimbursements to pay off the debt. "This funding structure has forced many of the transit authorities to incur debt, which ultimately costs the taxpayers more," Brewer said.

Transportation bond

Here's some of the projects for Western Massachusetts in a transportation bond bill approved yesterday by the state Senate:

- \$15 million for improvements to Westover Metropolitan Airport in Chicopee.
- \$10 million to rebuild Boston Road from Pasco Road in Springfield to the Wilbraham line.
- \$9.2 million to upgrade the Route 116 and Main Street corridor in Springfield from the 1-91 northbound off ramp at Exit 10 to the Chicopee city line.
- \$1.2 million for improving traffic flow at the Exit 3 interchange of the Massachusetts Turnpike in Westfield.
- \$2 million for reconstruction of Route 2 in Erving center.
- \$1.2 million to upgrade traffic lights at the Route 2 rotary in Greenfield.
- \$1.1 million to install traffic lights at the Route 202 rotary in South Hadley.
- An unspecified amount for planning and designing commuter rail between Hartford and Springfield.
- \$2 million for the Greenfield Transit Center project.
- \$2 million for resurfacing Route 57 in Granville.
- \$100,000 for completing the East Street revitalization project in Ludlow.
- \$200,000 to construct a highway barn and salt shed in Southwick.
- \$750,000 for improvements on a section of Feeding Hills Road in Southwick including installation of traffic signals.
- \$1 million to rebuild a retaining wall along Montgomery Road in Russell and Carrington Road in Montgomery.

Source: Senate's transportation bond bill.

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