



## THESE BOSTON-AREA ROADWAY PROJECTS COULD SEE A WINDFALL OF FEDERAL MONEY

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While the White House's plans for a massive infrastructure package remain in flux, several Boston-area transit projects could see a windfall of federal cash from a smaller, if several hundred billion dollar, transportation bill.

Rep. Ayanna Pressley's office said Tuesday that the House's five-year surface transportation reauthorization bill will include \$18.6 million for initiatives in her district, including an overhaul of a key corridor from Mattapan to Roxbury, improvements to the MBTA's Ruggles Station, and new bike lanes and bus improvements in Somerville.

"Thanks to our collective advocacy, we have cleared a major hurdle in bringing several of these key investments home to our constituents," Pressley said in a statement.

The Massachusetts congresswoman noted that the projects are "meant to address systemic inequities in our infrastructure and transportation systems and create healthier, safer, and more connected communities" in the state's 7th District. Millions are also slated to go toward local projects in neighboring congressional districts as well.

While a step forward, the funding isn't across the finish line yet.

The \$547 billion bill, which Democratic leaders unveiled last week, is set for debate on Wednesday, though major changes aren't expected in the Democrat-controlled House. If passed in the House, it would also still need to go through the narrowly divided Senate, where a bipartisan group has proposed a smaller \$303.5 billion surface transportation reauthorization bill, meaning that the ultimate bill could pair back certain allocations.

The surface transportation bill, which focuses on upgrading roads and bridges, is expected to move forward separate from the more wide-ranging \$2 trillion infrastructure bill pitched by

President Joe Biden. According to Pressley's office, they expect the bill to pass the House later this month.

The one-time reauthorization bill follows a similar bill passed in late 2015 to provide funding for projects directly through the federal government's Highway Trust Fund. However, House Democrats say it also "offers a new approach to federal transportation policy" with "record investments" in more environmentally friendly forms of transportation, like passenger rail, public transit, cycling, and walking infrastructure.

Stacy Thompson, the executive director of the LivableStreets Alliance, said the designation of funds in the House bill means "we are one step closer to implementing desperately needed transportation projects in Boston and Somerville."

"These projects aren't about paving roads — they are about the freedom to move," Thompson said.

Of course, Pressley isn't the only Boston-area legislator who requested funds for local projects.

Rep. Katherine Clark's office says all of her requests, including \$6 million for MBTA Blue Line signal improvements, were included in the bill. The legislation also includes \$3.6 million for new pedestrian and bike paths in Brookline and Newton requested by Rep. Jake Auchincloss.

In the 7th District, Pressley's office says the bill includes \$12 million for the first phase of plans to improve the traffic-plagued 4.5-mile stretch of Blue Hill Avenue and Warren Street from Mattapan to Roxbury.

While the project includes putting bus-only lanes in the center of Blue Hill Avenue, the federal funds included in the House bill would focus on multimodal improvements on Warren Street, which carries some of the most — and disproportionately low income — bus riders in the region, officials say. The corridor has also been singled out for its high rate of accidents.

Acting Mayor Kim Janey said the investments will "improve safety, increase transit reliability, and strengthen the surrounding communities of Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan as we strive to create a more equitable and inclusive Boston." The city and the MBTA plan to both chip in \$2.5 million.

The bill also includes \$3 million in pedestrian improvements at Ruggles Station and \$3 million for pedestrians and bicycle safety enhancement at the intersection of McGrath Highway and Mystic Avenue in East Somerville, which has been called the city's deadliest intersection. Pressley recently joined local advocates at a rally calling for improvements in the area.

An additional \$500,000 would go toward installing protected bike lanes along McGrath Highway in Somerville, and \$100,000 would go toward a transit signal priority project in Davis Square to detect oncoming buses and give them green light privileges.

Becca Wolfson, the executive director of the Boston Cyclists Union, also applauded the potential investments for shifting the focus away from cars.

“Where too often transportation funding has gone to building highways and roads that prioritize motor vehicle travel, these projects selected for funding in District 7 will undo the damage of vehicle-centric planning on state highways like McGrath and Route 38, will prioritize bus access for residents of Somerville and Mattapan, and will make roadways that have been hostile to people who want or need to bike in the district as well,” Wolfson said.



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