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Editorial: Boston needs infrastructure upgrades, and that means money

Boston's transportation system is badly in need of an upgrade. From roads to rails to the sea and sky, there's no disputing it. Every major snowstorm reminds us anew how inferior our commuter rail and subway systems are. The need to expand parking spaces and add runways at Logan International Airport is another example. And don't get us started on the deterioration of our roads and bridges.

While the state is moving forward with a plan to expand South Station that would address some of those problems, another plan — the North-South Rail Link — has the potential to fix many more transit problems, but at a higher cost. And the Green Line extension in Somerville, improvements to the Red and Orange lines, and a proposal for a rapid bus line from Forest Hills to Roslindale Square are all projects that are needed to improve how people get around our city.

The one thing all those, and many more, projects have in common? They all cost money. Lots of it.

If Boston's civic and business leaders want to have a city where flights in and out of town are easily accessible, and where infrastructure problems won't prevent workers from getting to work on time every day (regardless of the weather), we must collectively come up with a way to raise that kind of money. If for no other reason than the opportunity cost of not addressing Greater Boston's transportation-infrastructure needs will be so much higher if we continue to wait. This comes not only in the form of lost employee productivity, but also in the potential slowdown of new businesses moving or expanding here, due to

increased problems getting to and from the airport. Today, more companies are moving to Boston for its offerings: access to talent and capital, and the proximity of an international airport, for example. Tomorrow, as our system becomes more burdened, that may not be the case.

Whether the method of raising transportation funds comes from a newly resurrected (but long-resisted) gas tax, or the millionaire's tax, or some other increase to the cost of doing business in the city, the need for businesses and taxpayers to pitch in to help solve the problem is clear. This is one area where we can't afford to skimp today, lest we face a much more expensive problem down the neglected road.