



June 17, 2021

The Honorable Charles Baker
Governor
Room 280
24 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Karen Spilka
President of the Senate
Room 332

The Honorable Ronald Mariano
House Speaker
Room 356

Dear Governor Baker, President Spilka, and Speaker Mariano:

As Mayors and City Managers of Gateway cities served by high quality Regional Vocational Technical School Districts – we seek your support for committing \$300 million of the \$5.3 billion the Commonwealth is to receive as part of the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan enacted by Congress and signed in March by President Biden for construction and limitation of local costs for our regional Career Technical School districts. Three of the state’s largest Regional Vocational School Districts serve our students and are in the MA School Building Authority schematic design phase. They are expected to receive MSBA Board approval of project scope and budget in 2021. Local approvals from member communities will be sought in the fall of 2021 through the spring of 2022 – with preliminary construction to begin in 2022 with project completion in 2024/2025.

The three regional schools are Greater Fall River Vocational (commonly referred as Diman) located in Fall River, Northeast Metropolitan Regional Vocational Technical located in Wakefield, and Bristol Plymouth Regional Vocational located in Taunton. We recommend and request an additional \$100 million be committed to each of these districts from the aforementioned federal funds to offset local costs to insure these schools will be constructed in a timely basis.

Superintendent-Directors from all of these regional technical districts have kept us up to date on a regular basis before and during the Schematic Design phase of these projects. Moreover, they have submitted a collective appeal to Treasurer Deborah Goldberg and the MSBA Board of Directors requesting modification of MSBA policy and practice that limits MSBA reimbursement of actual assumed costs for these projects (see Appendix attached). They and we have also reached out to federal members of Congress seeking financial federal assistance.

Unfortunately, correspondence from the MSBA has indicated an unwillingness at this time to change existing caps imposed on construction projects or modification of their current policies. Our Congressional representatives have pointed to the state’s \$5.3 billion share of the American Rescue plan as an appropriate place for funding a portion of these critical projects.

We want to make it clear - we support these critical projects. We unabashedly support high quality Chapter 74 vocational technical programs for our families and students and we value the profound impact these districts have provided to our communities and on our local economies. We need and deserve additional financial assistance from our Commonwealth to insure project completion.

The last major Regional Vocational Technical District constructed serving Gateway communities was Essex North Shore Agricultural & Technical located in Danvers. The total project cost was \$134 million, MSBA and state grant awards at \$96 million, and the sale of North Shore Technical property at \$4 million, resulted in a total local capital assessment to member communities of only \$30 million.

Comparatively, the projects serving our communities are expected to have the following impact on district communities

Regional CTE District	Estimated Total Project Cost	Anticipated MSBA Maximum Grant Award	Projected Capital cost to Member Communities
Bristol Plymouth	\$306,798,279	\$122,971,977	\$183,826,302
Diman (G Fall River)	\$281,000,000	\$138,000,000	\$143,000,000
Northeast Metro	\$317,422,279	\$140,240,399	\$177,181,880

Required Share of Cost to Member communities is determined by Regional Agreements and the percentage of high school students attending the Regional Vocational Technical School District. The anticipated fiscal impact on Gateway Cities is staggering. The following does not include multi-year interest cost for bonded indebtedness – just each gateway city share of projected local capital costs.

Regional CTE District	Projected Enrollment Total	Gateway City Member(s)	Enrollment Percentage From Gateway Member(s)	Fiscal Impact Share of Cost to Gateway Member(s)
Bristol Plymouth	1400	Taunton	41.1%	\$ 75,552,610
Diman (G Fall River)	1500	Fall River	75.5%	\$107,965,000
Northeast Metro	1600		49.80%	\$ 88,245,152
		Chelsea	18.58%	\$ 32,919,038
		Malden	11.87%	\$ 21,023,923
		Revere	19.36%	\$ 34,302,191

Students from Gateway cities attending Regional Vocational Technical School Districts deserve no less than similar state of the art educational spaces as constructed at Minuteman Tech in Lexington, Cape Cod Technical in Harwich, and Essex Technical and Agricultural in Danvers. Yet without additional support of \$300 million from the \$5.3 billion as stated above – affording these projects from local revenues is problematic. In Chelsea alone, the projected annual bonded indebtedness from this project - at an assumed 4% interest rate spread over 30 years - would require an anticipated appropriation in FY26 of \$1,903,220 – an amount that currently exceeds its total allowable annual property tax levy increase by almost \$300,000.

With great respect for the challenges you face and with our profound support of the high quality vocational technical opportunities these projects will have for both our high school students, adults, and the future economic well-being of our communities, we collectively request your consideration of this timely and prudent request.

Sincerely,



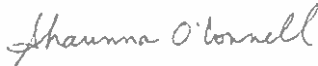
Brian M. Arrigo
Mayor of Revere



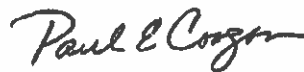
Thomas G. Ambrosino
City Manager of Chelsea



Gary Christenson
Mayor of Malden



Shaunna O'Connell
Mayor of Taunton



Paul Coogan
Mayor of Fall River

- cc. The Honorable Edward M. Markey, United States Senate
The Honorable Elizabeth A. Warren, United States Senate
Honorable Massachusetts Members of the US House of Representatives
The Honorable Michael Rodrigues, MA Senate Chair of Joint Committee on Ways & Means
The Honorable Aaron Michlewitz, MA House Chair of Joint Committee on Ways & Means
The Honorable Jason M. Lewis, MA Senate Chair of Joint Committee on Education
The Honorable Alice Hanlon Peisch, MA House Chair of Joint Committee on Education
The Honorable Bruce E. Tarr, MA Senate Minority Leader
The Honorable Bradley H. Jones, Jr, MA House Minority Leader

School Committee Members, Local Municipal Officials, and Superintendent-Directors at Bristol Plymouth Regional Vocational School District, Greater Fall River Regional Vocational School District, and Northeast Metropolitan Regional Vocational School District

Jeff Riley, Commissioner of MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Katherine Craven, Chair MA Board of Elementary and Secondary Education
James Peyser, MA Secretary of Education
Thomas Scott, Executive Director, MA Association of School Superintendents
Glenn Koocher, Executive Director, MA Association of School Committees
Geoffrey Beckwith, Executive Director, MA Municipal Association
Timothy Murray and Lew Finfer of the MA Alliance for Vocational Technical Education
Jack McCarthy, Executive Director, MA School Building Authority

AVTE

Alliance for Vocational Technical Education

July 2, 2021

The Honorable Charles Baker
Governor
24 Beacon St, Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Karen Spilka
President of the Senate
24 Beacon St, Room 332
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Ronald Mariano
Speaker of the House
24 Beacon St, Room 356
Boston, MA 02133

RE: AVTE Support for Regional Vocational School Construction Using ARPA Funds

The Alliance for Vocational Technical Education (AVTE) would like to express its support for designating \$300 million of the \$5.3 billion the Commonwealth is set to receive under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) towards the construction of three high quality regional vocational technical schools here in Massachusetts.

AVTE is a wide-ranging coalition of workforce development groups, community-based nonprofits, chambers of commerce, business associations, school administrators and teachers, and charities dedicated to promoting vocational technical education in the Commonwealth.

The three schools AVTE supports ARPA allocations for are Northeast Metropolitan Regional Vocational High School in Wakefield (herein referred to as Northeast Metro), Bristol-Plymouth Regional Technical School in Taunton (herein referred to as Bristol-Plymouth), and Greater Fall River Regional Vocational Technical High School in Fall River, also known as Diman Regional (herein referred to as Diman). The recent Interim Final Rule guidance released by the U.S. Department of the Treasury indicates that governments may use ARPA funds for infrastructure costs, including upgrading educational infrastructure.

AVTE writes in support of the city managers and mayors of Revere, Chelsea, Malden, Taunton, and Fall River who wrote to your offices on June 17 requesting that \$100 million be put towards each of the three schools' construction costs. The necessary upgrades to these schools to better accommodate the increasing demand for vocational technical education across the state are estimated to run close to a billion dollars for all three schools combined. Allocating federal funding to these projects will also remove the burden from the local communities that are part of the school district, further ensuring that the district municipalities approve of the projects.

Northeast Metro, Bristol-Plymouth, and Diman all serve Gateway Cities with diverse populations and disadvantaged communities. AVTE, as well as these schools and their host municipalities, believe that vocational technical education provides children from diverse backgrounds and disadvantaged communities with high quality comprehensive education and the opportunity to enter a set of viable technical career paths which fill the Commonwealth's increasing gap of job growth in crucial industries such as manufacturing, utilities, computer sciences, health sciences, and more.

A Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) report in February 2021 found that statewide, there are 1.75 completed student applications for every one seat in vocational schools, indicating high levels of demand and inadequate physical capacity. The DESE report also found that 44 out

AVTE Executive Committee Members

Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce | Massachusetts Communities Action Network | The Workforce Solutions Group | Worcester Community Action Council | Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators | Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents

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of 58 of the Commonwealth's vocational technical programs and schools had waitlists in the 2020-2021 school year, and that students of color and those from other disadvantaged backgrounds were less likely to apply and less likely to be accepted to vocational schools around the state when compared to white, wealthier students. The expansions at Northeast Metro, Bristol-Plymouth, and Diman are necessary in this regard to expand the schools' overall capacities to take on new students, especially those from disadvantaged students in the Gateway Cities they serve.

Investing capital into these schools is investing into these Gateway Cities and the opportunities afforded to their students and their families.

The projects are expected to total \$317.4 million for Northeast Metro, \$306.8 million for Bristol-Plymouth, and \$281 million for Diman. Each of the schools are in the Massachusetts School Building Authority's (MSBA) schematic design phase and anticipate MSBA board approval of their projects this year. Local approvals from each of the school districts' communities will be sought out in the fall of 2021 and construction is expected to begin sometime in mid-to-late 2022. However, the MSBA has policies and practices that limit the rate at which they reimburse actual assumed costs.

AVTE, as well as the city managers and mayors of the communities served by the three schools, have made efforts to advocate for the MSBA to change its reimbursement rate policies to better reflect the costs associated with vocational school construction. The current rate policies make the costs prohibitively expensive for the communities served by not only these three regional schools, but by others around the Commonwealth.

With an understanding for the difficult decisions to be made on Beacon Hill in the coming weeks regarding the \$5.3 billion ARPA allocation, AVTE, as well as the communities of Revere, Chelsea, Malden, Taunton, and Fall River, request that \$100 million each be made available to Northeast Metro, Bristol-Plymouth, and Diman to ensure that these schools receive the investment they need and deserve to continue offering high quality education and opportunities to students of all backgrounds.

Signed,

Timothy Murray
President and CEO
Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce

Katherine Mainzer
Director
The Workforce Solutions Group

Dr. Robert Baldwin
President
Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents

Charles Lyons
President
Lyons Consulting Group LLC

Lewis Finfer
Special Projects Coordinator
Massachusetts Communities Action Network

Marybeth Campell
Executive Director
Worcester Community Action Council

AVTE Executive Committee Members



March 15, 2021

The Honorable Deborah B. Goldberg
State Treasurer and Chair of MSBA Board of Directors
State House, Room 227
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Treasurer Goldberg:

We write you collectively to seek your support in appointing a sub-committee of the Massachusetts School Building Authority Board of Directors at your upcoming April 14, 2021 meeting to examine existing limitations imposed by MSBA policy and practice that impose significant fiscal challenges on our communities' ability to afford the local share of our school building projects. We hope to work with this sub-committee to review said policies and consider possible changes at the MSBA Board Business meeting scheduled on May 24, 2021.

We suggest the following for review:

- Square footage construction limitation for MSBA reimbursement on Regional Vocational Technical (hereafter RVT) school projects and consideration of increasing same due to the reality that these projects are normally 125% larger than comprehensive high schools. In addition to increasing the existing construction limitation cost of \$333 per square foot, Regional Vocational Technical School projects require higher costs per square foot due to added ventilation, equipment, infrastructure, concrete, and more durable finishes/surfaces in lab spaces. Moreover, programs require more space per student to meet safety and educational standards. Therefore, a higher construction limitation cost for Regional Vocational Technical Schools as compared to other schools should be considered.
- Consideration of increasing \$1,200 limitation on per pupil assumptions for Technology and Furnishings, Furniture and Equipment in RVT projects because our costs are significantly higher than other schools due to technical and vocational curriculums.
- MSBA's current practice of not allowing important components of RVT school administrative and program spaces eligible for construction reimbursement despite the fact that these spaces are required and expected to be within the confines of school campuses
- Consideration to expand site costs eligible for reimbursement due to our need to construct new schools in a safe and environmentally acceptable manner on existing campuses while maintaining existing operations
- Consideration that MSBA will commit to not reducing the Maximum Potential Grant established at Project Funding Agreement by any future Third Party Funding received as we continue efforts to seek additional federal and state support to reduce costs of our projects on our member communities.

The Honorable Deborah B. Goldberg
March 15, 2021
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We commit to work with your sub-committee and the MSBA Board in the hope of recommending changes to your policies and practices before grant awards are finalized by the MSBA Board of Directors.

We will provide expert advice from our architects, operation project managers, and other consultants to inform this process.

Our three school projects will total nearly \$1 billion in construction costs. All of our districts have Gateway cities that are expected to share a significant burden of the local share of project costs. We are grateful of the support we have from the MA Association of Vocational Administrators (MAVA), the Alliance for Vocational Education (AVTE), our local officials and many of our state legislators for both our projects and the need to do all we can to ensure success by minimizing local costs on our fiscally challenged communities. We all very much appreciate the high level of professionalism received from the quality staff employed at the MA School Building Authority.

We await your timely reply and look forward to affirmative support of our collective request.

Thank you for your consideration.



Dr. Alexandre Magalhaes
Superintendent-Director
Bristol-Plymouth Regional Technical School



Elvio Ferreira, Ed. D
Superintendent-Director
Greater Fall River Vocational School District



David S. DiBarri
Superintendent-Director
Northeast Metropolitan Regional Vocational School District

cc: James A. MacDonald, Chief Executive Officer, MSBA
Jack McCarthy, Deputy Chief Executive Officer/Executive Director, MSBA
School Committee Members from Bristol Plymouth, Greater Fall River, and Northeast Metropolitan
Local legislators from member communities
Local Chief Municipal Officers in district communities
Charles Lyons, President, Lyons Consulting LLC