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## **Public/private partnerships: Positive example of how government and private sector work together**

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Governor Patrick recently announced that his administration will focus investment in infrastructure in an effort to grow the Commonwealth's economy over the next several years. This commitment was one of the three principal areas of focus in his January 15th "State of the Commonwealth" address. During his speech, Patrick called for "specific service improvements and expansion projects over time, without the risk that funds will be diverted to the next good idea." The governor's commitment to infrastructure funding comes at a crucial time as failing transportation networks and infrastructure threatens the sustainability of the state's economic future.

A recent Texas A&M Transportation Institute study identified the metro Boston area as one of the 10 most congested regions in the country. According to the same study, \$121 billion were lost nationwide in productivity and fuel costs as a result of traffic congestion in 2011. The Patrick administration is demonstrating leadership by trying to tackle this issue head on. An effective infrastructure is critical to ensure that the Commonwealth can effectively connect employee talent to jobs, provide transportation options and reduce overall congestion. It is clear that success will depend on how government and the private sector work together. An example of this public/private commitment is the Middlesex 3 Coalition.

The Middlesex 3 Coalition arose out of an early initiative of the Patrick administration. Its mission was to tackle policy issues that affect economic development in Middlesex County's Rte. 3 corridor. The Middlesex 3 Coalition is a public/private partnership of community and industry leaders in the towns of Bedford, Billerica, Burlington, Chelmsford and the city of Lowell. The Middlesex 3 Coalition also has the support and participation of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development and is focused on strengthening and growing economic development by creating and retaining jobs; increasing and diversifying the tax base; and improving the quality of life of residents of the participating communities. Members include stakeholders in local government, business, finance, education and development who have combined resources to promote the competitive advantages of the region and advance the economic vitality of the corridor. In today's fractured political landscape, it is a remarkable example of public and private parties all with unique interests working together for the common good of coordinated and sustainable economic development.

Major corporations and expanding businesses have continued to search the suburbs for larger, less expensive tracts of land that will allow for future corporate growth and development. However, employers are often limited by a lack of housing diversity and transportation options that can accommodate employees at all levels, from top executives to support staff. Middlesex 3 is attacking these issues to develop "real" solutions.

A case in point, the Middlesex 3 Coalition recognizes that it is critical that our regional transportation

network adjust to accommodate this growth. The Middlesex 3 Coalition is attempting to ensure a return on the public investment associated with the expansion of Rte. 3 from Burlington to the New Hampshire line. This expansion has made the region more accessible from points north and south, and the expansion of Middlesex Turnpike via the MITRE Link has improved traffic flow to existing and future businesses in Burlington, Bedford and Billerica. The Middlesex 3 Coalition is working with the state and business leaders not only to identify problems but to develop and implement real solutions. The Middlesex 3 Coalition hopes to explore and implement improvements such as public transportation coordination and cross connection opportunities from commuter rail and bus lines. The Middlesex 3 Coalition looks forward to continuing its cross sector collaboration to ensure that these goals are met, effecting positive change for the region and the state.

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