



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
MASSACHUSETTS SENATE
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1053

0318

SENATOR STEPHEN M. BREWER

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July 24, 2003

A. Joseph DeNucci
Auditor of the Commonwealth
State House, Room 229
Boston, MA 02133

RECEIVED

AUG 13 2003

OFFICE OF STATE AUDITOR
DIVISION OF LOCAL MANDATES

Dear Mr. DeNucci:

I am writing in regard to a matter of utmost importance to me and to the many regional school districts I represent in the Senate.

The regional school transportation account (7035-0006) provides reimbursement to regional schools districts for the prohibitive costs of transporting students from member towns to and from school. According to the General Laws, school committees must provide transportation to students who reside in excess of two miles from their school (G.L., c.71, sec 68). Furthermore, the General Laws indicate that towns will receive state reimbursement for transportation provided to students who reside at least one and one-half miles from their school (G.L., c.71, sec 7A).

As you may know, since the advent of regional schools their transportation account has been historically underfunded. In recent years the lack of funding for regional school transportation has become a critical problem. In the past five fiscal years, the account has been funded as follows:

FY00: \$40,605,180
FY01: \$48,684,734
FY02: \$51,118,970
FY03: \$41,705,180
FY04: \$26,395,683

The failure of the Commonwealth to adequately fund regional school transportation reimbursements, especially for the current fiscal year, has created a crisis in local budgets throughout the rural areas of the Commonwealth.

The case in point is the Quaboag Regional School District, which is considering drastic measures to keep their school budget afloat due to decreases in funding for state mandates including transportation, MCAS and special education. I have enclosed for your review an article that appeared in the *Worcester Telegram & Gazette* on July 24, 2003. The article describes the consideration of the Board of Selectmen in the Town of West Brookfield of seizing state owned-land in the town to be utilized to recoup lost revenue due to cuts in funding for state mandated programs.

I would be interested in hearing your opinion on this subject. As you know, there is precedent for the sale of state owned property to fund mandates.

Thank you for your consideration of these issues.

Sincerely,



STEPHEN M. BREWER

State Senator

SMB/jc

Enclosure