

## Coronavirus Update

Stay informed about coronavirus – COVID-19. Learn more. *May. 7th, 2020, 9:00 am*

[Read more](#) ▶



Mass.gov

### PRESS RELEASE

# Baker-Polito Administration Highlights Work Zone Awareness Week and Roadway Safety Legislation

**Baker-Polito Administration Highlights Work Zone Awareness  
Week and Roadway Safety Legislation**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

4/11/2019

Massachusetts Department of Transportation

MEDIA CONTACT

---

---

## Jacquelyn Goddard, Director of Communications, MassDOT

### Phone

(857) 368-8500 (tel:8573688500)

### Online

[jacquelyn.goddard@dot.state.ma.us](mailto:jacquelyn.goddard@dot.state.ma.us)

(mailto:jacquelyn.goddard@dot.state.ma.us)

**BOSTON** — Governor Charlie Baker today joined Highway Administrator Jonathan Gulliver and Massachusetts State Police Major Richard Ball at an event in South Boston to bring attention to National Work Zone Awareness week and the importance of the Baker-Polito Administration’s recently filed road safety legislation, An Act Relative to Improving Safety on the Roads of the Commonwealth.

“National Work Zone Awareness Week serves as an important reminder that there is more to do to ensure safety for everyone traveling and working on the Commonwealth’s roadways,” said Governor Baker. “Our administration is investing over \$7 billion in roadway and bridge infrastructure over the next five years, and we look forward to working with the Legislature to pass legislation we filed to limit distracted driving, reduce speeds in work zones and equip law enforcement with the tools to better enforce seatbelt laws and penalties for operating under the influence.”

“Our Administration is working to increase roadway safety by supporting law enforcement and transportation officials with new tools to help save lives,” said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito. “We appreciate drivers throughout the Commonwealth making smart driving decisions and look forward to working

closely with members of the Legislature to help pass this important roadway safety bill.”

Each year at the start of construction season, National Work Zone Awareness Week is held to bring national attention to motorist and worker safety and mobility issues in work zones. Events are held across the country in order to encourage safe driving through highway construction areas and remind the public that they must use extra caution to keep themselves and others safe.

Between 2012 and 2016, 15,662 people were seriously injured and 1,820 people lost their lives on the roadways of the Commonwealth. In addition, 14 road workers were killed between 2009 and 2016. MassDOT’s data also indicates that in 2018, there were 15 crashes in work zones throughout Massachusetts.

“Our greatest priority is the safety of those traveling and working on our transportation systems,” said Transportation Secretary and CEO Stephanie Pollack. “These common-sense proposals will implement several measures that would have a direct impact on safety for drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, highway workers, members of law enforcement, and all other roadway users.”

“We are committed to increasing work zone safety for our highway crews who are helping strengthen our road and bridge networks,” said Highway Administrator Gulliver. “This legislation would make numerous important changes including allowing MassDOT to establish mandatory temporary lower speeds in construction zones and double fines when workers are present.”

The proposals to increase road safety being made by the Baker-Polito Administration stem, in part, from discussions with members of the Massachusetts Legislature, strategies outlined in the 2018 Massachusetts Strategic Highway Safety Plan and input from key stakeholders like The Massachusetts Vision Zero Coalition and various law enforcement professionals.

“When law enforcement officers are struck on roadways it is frequently in work zones while they are protecting road crews who are also at risk,” said Public Safety and Security Secretary Thomas Turco. “Keeping them and the driving public safe in work zones is a high priority as we pursue measures to drive down the rate of roadway injuries and deaths.”

An Act Relative to Improving Safety on the Roads of the Commonwealth includes proposals on the following topics:

- Hands-free: Requires electronic devices to be used in “hands-free” mode and would not allow anyone operating a motor vehicle to touch or hold a mobile electronic device, “except to perform a single tap or swipe to activate, deactivate, or initiate hands-free mode.” The bill would permit talking, texting and other tasks to be completed by voice commands and would allow law enforcement officers to better enforce distraction laws.
- Primary seatbelt: Law enforcement would be permitted to stop motorists for not wearing seatbelts.
- Work zone safety: Allows MassDOT to establish mandatory temporary lower speed limits in construction zones that would double fines when

workers are present. Currently, lower speed limits in construction zones are only suggestions and law enforcement cannot enforce them.

- Side guards and additional mirrors: The proposal would require all Commonwealth-owned and operated vehicles over 10,000 pounds to have side guards, convex mirrors, and cross-over mirrors after January 1, 2020. This law would require all Commonwealth and municipal contractors to have these devices by January 1, 2022. Certain vehicle classifications would be exempt and the law grants the authority to the Registrar of Motor Vehicles to grant additional exemptions, in keeping with U.S. DOT standards.
- Ignition interlock, hardship licenses: Proposal would require the use of ignition interlock devices for first offenders who apply for hardship licenses, requiring an interlock device for a minimum of six months as a condition of obtaining a hardship license.
- Ignition interlock, penalties for violating terms of interlock program: Clarifies the ability of the Registry to penalize those who attempt to drive after drinking alcohol, (even with an interlock device), or who tamper with an interlock device.
- New technology: Electric scooters and other low speed mobility devices, such as electric bicycles, currently lack a specific vehicle classification. The proposal treats these new technology items the same as bicycles according to existing Mass General Law. For example, these operators, like bicyclists would need to wear a helmet if under the age of 16, would be required to yield to people walking and provide an audible signal when

passing, and could not block vehicular or pedestrian traffic when parked. In addition, the law would require MassDOT to establish a micro-mobility advisory working group to propose future changes for safe adoption of emerging and undefined low speed mobility devices.

To protect those working, the legislation would allow the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) to set up temporary mandatory speed limits in construction zones. To protect people walking, bicycling and using motorcycles on Massachusetts roadways, the legislation would require state-owned heavy trucks and state and municipally-contracted vehicles to be equipped with convex and cross-over mirrors and require the installation of side guards between the front and rear wheels of these vehicles to protect people from being caught under a truck and run over by its rear wheels. The bill expands efforts to limit distracted driving by having Massachusetts join sixteen other states, including all of our neighboring New England states, in requiring hands-free use of electronic devices while driving. Law enforcement would also be able to stop motorists who are not wearing seatbelts under this legislation.

The proposal corrects inconsistencies in the law for those convicted of Operating under the Influence (OUI) by requiring first-time offenders who apply for hardship licenses to be placed into the ignition interlock program and clarifying the ability of the Registry of Motor Vehicles to penalize those who attempt to drive after consuming alcohol, even with an ignition interlock device.

Emerging micro mobility technologies like electric scooters and increased use of electric bicycles present both opportunities as a compliment to current

means of transportation and challenges as an industry without any existing statutory framework. As a first step, the administration proposes treating electric scooters and pedal assist electric bicycles the same way bicycles are treated under state law and establishing a multi-party advisory group to recommend more permanent policies.

###

## Media Contact

**Jacquelyn Goddard, Director of Communications,  
MassDOT**

### Phone

(857) 368-8500 (tel:8573688500)

### Online

[jacquelyn.goddard@dot.state.ma.us](mailto:jacquelyn.goddard@dot.state.ma.us) (mailto:jacquelyn.goddard@dot.state.ma.us)



## Massachusetts Department of Transportation

(/orgs/massachusetts-department-of-transportation)

Our mission is to deliver excellent customer service and safety to people traveling in the Commonwealth. We work to provide our nation's safest and most reliable transportation system to strengthen our economy and quality of life.

**More** (/orgs/massachusetts-department-of-transportation)

Did you find what you were looking for on this webpage?

Yes  No

SEND FEEDBACK