

Good Morning.

Thank you to the Municipal Research Bureau's members and guests for convening important civic conversations in our city for 90 years. I'm grateful to be here with my colleagues and members of our cabinet: [acknowledge cabinet members in attendance].

125 years ago, the Boston Globe ran a headline that read: "Novelty Over." The article described how the recently constructed underground train car between the Park Street and Boylston Street stations was starting to see fewer riders boarding just for fun.

Two days after the nation's first ever subway line opened, apparently the novelty had already worn off. In its place was everyday efficiency and convenience.

Today, we take great pride in the fact that we were the first city in the country to make this groundbreaking investment in public transit—innovating with the very first subway tunnel in the nation. But Boston didn't always feel that way.

In fact, when it was first introduced, the idea to build an underground subway system was labeled dangerous and radical.

Business owners on Tremont Street organized "The Anti-Subway League," holding meetings, distributing flyers, and lobbying local leaders to vote against the line's creation. They raised aesthetic concerns about digging up the historic Common...

And warned that the construction would disturb snakes and rats living underground, forcing them to the surface and into the streets, spreading fear and disease through our city...

Some pointed out that building the tunnel would require disturbing buried remains, which could bring bad luck...And then there were concerns about how this might impact our economy.

The League's president, W.G. Harris, spoke of the, quote, "great disadvantage and damage to business which will necessarily follow so extensive a tearing up of the street."

Many others echoed this, worrying that their businesses would sustain serious losses during the period of heavy construction, and never recover.

Others spoke of the threat to health and property posed by construction that might disrupt sewers, water pipes, and electric wiring.

The League eventually collected thousands of signatures from residents and business owners opposing the creation of, quote, "\*any\* subway in \*any\* portion of the City of Boston."

As someone who rides the T to work every day, I won't tell you that it's perfect. But I think we can all agree that a Boston without \*any\* T in \*any\* portion of the city, would not be a better Boston.

That's true today, and it became apparent almost immediately after that first line was up and running. Within three years of its construction, Park Street was the fourth most-used subway station in the world!

In the first ten years after the T was introduced, Boston's public transit ridership numbers increased by nearly 60%. And in the decades that followed, public transit became the most popular way for residents and visitors alike to access downtown...with the T bringing in roughly half of all downtown

foot traffic. The Common was restored, snakes didn't take over the city, and the business owners on Tremont Street couldn't have been happier.

Even more importantly, residents across Boston were connected to jobs, healthcare, education, and housing. Neighborhoods and businesses, parks and libraries, museums and colleges all suddenly became accessible in ways they hadn't been before.

Public transit proved to be a public good in the truest sense of the term.

It connects us to the places and resources we need, to thrive in our communities. And it connects us to each other.

Today, we have a similar opportunity to connect and transform our city in a moment of urgency and possibility.

The urgency is clear.

Cities across our country are struggling to fully emerge from the pandemic. Remote and hybrid work have forever changed our economy and the relationship between where we live and what we do. Boston lost roughly 37,000 residents between 2020 and 2021—a little less than 1% of our total population. But working in-person at our downtown commercial buildings remains down by nearly a third of the pre-pandemic foot traffic. As global competition for talent and capital sharpens in this changed environment of worker flexibility, Boston must become a space where *people* can thrive...where innovators and entrepreneurs from all communities and walks of life *want* to be, and can *afford* to stay.

At the same time, the pandemic deepened existing inequities across our society. From higher mortality rates within Black communities, to the virus's disproportionate impact on women in the workforce, and the urgency of climate action...we are at a crossroads.

And the perception that *inaction* is somehow safer—that the status quo comes at no cost—simply isn't true.

Our challenges, long predating the pandemic, have been made more complicated—grown more entrenched—by our own unwillingness to, as the Anti-Subway League President said, so extensively tear up the street. From deferred maintenance on the T or in our school buildings, skyrocketing housing costs, and the deepening racial wealth gap pushing families out, to pollution from increasingly congested roads impacting our long-term health, and the mental health epidemic rooted in trauma, and isolation...

Addressing our longstanding challenges will require all of us. We'll need to embrace the disruption that accompanies the kind of transformative changes we need right now. We must move away from putting band-aids on the symptoms of our problems, and invest instead in tackling root causes.

*Here* is where our greatest opportunity lies—in fact, local government stands the best chance to rebuild our economy, democracy, and communities in this moment. Because as intertwined as our challenges are, so are our solutions.

And we're already shifting what's possible through setting a foundation for the future, connecting our communities, and delivering on the details of city government.

1) A FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE

Boston may be known for our history and longevity, but our true legacy is that we have pushed this country to reimagine a foundation for the future, again and again—from the birth of our democracy and public education, to life-saving technologies and innovations.

And in 2022, being *\*the\** leading city for the future means taking action to become the greenest city in America—a city for everyone, where families can thrive.

We've built on the foundation grown over centuries of collaboration and ecosystem-building through our anchor institutions in healthcare, and higher education, to emerge as a national pacesetter and hub in life sciences, clean energy, and mission-driven tech.

Now, let us build the workforce of the future to nurture and grow these industries, reflecting the full diversity of our communities, here in the birthplace of public education.

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As early as 1888, kindergartens in our city were admitting children as young as three-and-a-half.

Ironically, today—with more definitive science on the significant benefits of early education—we have even more work to do. Between 2017 and 2020, the number of early education centers serving children under the age of five in Boston fell by 24%.

We *\*know\** how crucial those first few years of development are. And how powerful it can be to get them right, for our littlest leaders, our families, and our economy.

That's why earlier this year, we established the city's first-ever Office of Early Childhood, committed to creating universal, affordable, high-quality early education and care for all infants, toddlers, and children under the age of five. Over the next year, the office will focus on expanding our options for early education and care, and accelerating the creation of a universal pre-K system.

This upcoming school year, 1,000 more four-year-olds and hundreds more three-year-olds will be enrolled in a quality pre-kindergarten program than when the initiative first began. And we are working to clarify existing siting and funding requirements in the zoning code to embed the centrality of early education and care in Boston's growth.

We'll also be investing in the workforce by building sustainable career paths for early educators, and making life easier for our families by creating a multilingual one-stop shop for program enrollment.

In partnership with BPS, we'll integrate family child care programs with our universal pre-K initiative—because these community-based programs often offer benefits like native language instruction, mixed-age learning environments, and more flexible schedules for working families.

More than one in five family households in Boston have children under the age of five.

When we invest in meeting the needs of our children, we're investing in Boston's families. In Boston's immigrants, and entrepreneurs...our essential workers, and parents, and communities of color. And of course in our youngest residents, which yields the greatest return on investment.

After all, we don't just attract the best and brightest minds—we grow and raise them.

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Which brings me to our most important and immediate pipeline for talent and innovation in our city: our schools.

As a mom with two boys in Boston Public Schools, I'm deeply aware of the potential our education system has to broaden horizons and widen the paths our young people tread.

And I'm also aware of the ways our current system falls short of that goal. Boston Public Schools today face enormous disparities, deepened by the pandemic, which need to be addressed with urgency.

Over the course of a mayoral term, a child who was just entering kindergarten will be almost finished with elementary school. A student entering high school will be preparing to graduate and leave BPS.

There is no time to waste.

Earlier this month, we announced a major expansion of Boston's early college and innovation pathways, partnering Boston Public Schools with higher education and private sector partners to get a headstart on training our workforce for the future. We also launched our Green New Deal for BPS, because healthy, inspiring facilities are critical for rigorous and nurturing learning.

As we near the end of the search for our next school superintendent, we're also changing the structures throughout all of city government to support our school department. City Hall's Operations Cabinet is growing significantly to share in the community process, design, engineering and construction that will dramatically overhaul our school facilities, so BPS has more bandwidth to focus on teaching and learning.

Other city departments are connecting our young people and their families with resources to close the digital divide, address food insecurity, housing instability, and offer more youth jobs than ever before.

Because preparing our future leaders to reach their fullest potential, means taking a holistic approach to supporting them and the communities that raise them.

## 2) CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

With this group and so many others across the city, we've discussed the barriers and complexities of how Boston's development and success hasn't been shared equitably across our communities.

Today, growing housing costs, made worse by a lack of reliable transportation options, fuels displacement for families across our neighborhoods, and hamstring companies and organizations looking to recruit and retain talent.

Our charge in this moment is to ensure that Boston's growth connects our communities, with thoughtful, comprehensive planning; and infrastructure for mobility and accessibility.

Last week, we welcomed our new Chief of Planning to City Hall. Arthur Jemison brings a wealth of expertise, wisdom, and vision to embark on the journey of reorienting our processes and structures toward predictability, resiliency, and affordability in Boston. Together with our Chief, our new Director of Operations and Organizational Transformation, and a Director of Urban Design, we will connect our communities with that foundation for the future: our shared growth.

That organizational capacity is backed up by resources for our recovery from the pandemic. We will be directing the bulk of our federal recovery dollars to housing affordability—from preserving existing affordable units, to helping finance new housing, and boosting home ownership.

Connecting our communities also means doing more to celebrate and uplift the heart and soul of our city...the arts and culture that bring Boston to life, infuse our neighborhoods with energy and inspiration, and make our city a place that people want to live, work, and play in!

The strength and vibrancy of our arts scene underpins our community and our economy. Not only are the arts essential for our mental and emotional wellbeing, they're central to our economic recovery.

And yet we consistently lag behind our peer cities when it comes to public investments in this crucial—and joyous—engine for future growth.

That's why the budget we've proposed—and that's with the City Council right now for consideration—makes a powerful investment in our arts and culture sector through the capital budget, in addition to a proposed investment of federal recovery funds as infrastructure for placemaking, and integrating arts and culture into every aspect of civic life.

### 3) DELIVERING ON THE DETAILS

The challenges before us aren't new—they're long-standing, complex, daunting even. But what's special about city government, especially now, is that there is always room for action at the local level.

Even in our first six months, we've already begun breaking down the details of how municipal government can act with impact.

We're putting our money where our mouth is to close the racial wealth gap, with a focus on equity in city contracting. This month we announced that starting July 1st, City Fresh Foods will—true to their name!—provide fresh, nutritious, culturally relevant food for our nearly 50,000 BPS students. This vended meals contract is valued at over \$17 million dollars, and is the largest non-construction contract the City has awarded to a certified Black-owned business.

As the opioid crisis sweeps through communities across the country, we're innovating and measuring the impacts of a low-threshold, supportive housing approach to prevent the dangers of encampments, and connect residents to services they need.

In the face of accelerating climate change, we're transitioning diesel-polluting school buses to electric vehicles, serviced by Madison Park students who will have the training to step into opportunities in the green economy.

With the pandemic deepening a mental health epidemic, in our schools, homes, and communities, at the city level, we're proposing a new behavioral health center to recruit, train, and place clinicians of color and multilingual providers in much-needed roles to meet our communities where they are.

We're making plans for water and sewer infrastructure, waste management and curbside composting, and street design that add up to a healthy, resilient city for all of us.

Our job is to build the trust needed to do big things together, by getting the little things right—reimagining what's possible block by block, week by week.

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I recently had the honor of writing a letter to be included in the time capsule buried in the center of the new City Hall plaza that's currently under construction.

And in the hopes of writing something worthy of the future, I looked to the past.

I read through time capsule letters from previous mayors throughout our city's history—from 1830, 1930, and 1981.

In so many ways it was surreal to read the words of my predecessors reaching through the centuries to convey their hopes and dreams and fears.

There were many differences—in voice, in style, in tone. But they all shared two things.

First: They all made some attempt at imagining our city's future.

Even while acknowledging the challenge of trying to picture a world changed by, in some cases, hundreds of years of technological advancement, medical innovation, and cultural progress...they tried!

They guessed at cloning and alternative energy sources, and even how many of the surrounding cities and towns Boston would come to encompass.

And yet, despite all their imagining, the second thing that every single letter shared was that they began with some version of: "Sir," or "Dear Mr. Mayor."

For all their determination to dream big and boldly about our future, not a single mayor could imagine that some day, someone like me, or Kim Janey before me, would be mayor.

And almost certainly, they couldn't have imagined the resources and momentum available to us at *\*this\** moment to implement lasting changes and build a foundation for a brighter future.

So, if you take one thing away from today, let it be this: This moment is proof that we are capable of so much more than we can imagine.

We can make transit accessible; and housing, and high-quality child care, affordable. We can close the gaps in our school system and become the greenest city in America. We can make the arts sustainable, and pervasive, and build a city that's more connected, equitable, healthy, and joyous.

But to do so, we can't be afraid to tear up the street. To act with urgency. Dream bigger and bolder than we ever have before, and take action *\*together\** on the details that move us closer, step by step, to the future all of us deserve.

I want to thank you all, again, for giving me this opportunity to share my vision with you—and for joining me here today. And we'll need your partnership in joining us to embrace the possibility that tomorrow holds, as well.

Thank you.

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