

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL



May 12, 2017

Re: Federal Fiscal Years 2018-2022 Transportation Improvement Program

Dear Mr. Mohler,

The Regional Transportation Advisory Council (Advisory Council) is an independent group of citizen and regional advocacy groups, municipal officials, and agencies charged by the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) with providing public input on transportation planning and programming.

The Advisory Council has reviewed and discussed the draft Federal Fiscal Years (FFY) 2018-2022 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and offers the following comments:

1. The Advisory Council would like to thank the MPO staff for its attention to reframing and improving communication, information, and materials related to the TIP. The Advisory Council believes this information has been helpful in explaining the TIP processes to stakeholders and the public.
2. The Advisory Council appreciates the MPO's attention to newly established priorities and the "binning" approach by which projects are compared to other projects of the same type in the TIP scoring. This helps to address potential concerns about the scoring criteria favoring or not favoring certain types of projects.
3. While the Community Transportation (CT) category in the TIP does not have funds identified until FFY 2021, the Advisory Council suggests that the MPO begin to consider criteria related to the sustainability of projects in this category and notes that a study has been identified to do so in the FY 2018 United Planning Work Program (UPWP).
4. The Advisory Council notes there are a few projects on the TIP programming scenario list that were given initial approval as much as 15 to 20 years ago. The Advisory Council notes that there have been many examples of changes in both regional and local priorities since that time. The Advisory Council urges the MPO to reconfirm that those projects are still priorities with the project sponsors, and also to re-score the projects on a regular basis.
5. The Advisory Council notes the importance of adhering to the original schedule once a project is programmed, to minimize the potential for cost overruns and the need to shift projects to accommodate cost and schedule changes. The Advisory Council recognizes the effort MPO staff has made in shuffling projects to keep them on their original schedule and ensure they are "shovel-ready."

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6. The Advisory Council encourages the MPO to consider any opportunities to fund programmed projects from sources other than the MPO, should such opportunities arise, so that funds can be reallocated to other projects to reduce the backlog on the MPO list.
7. The Advisory Council looks forward to continuing discussion with the MPO and Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) on cost estimation, processes to budget realistically, and avoidance of major cost increases, per our concerns raised on last year's TIP.

We appreciate the opportunity to express our thoughts to the MPO.

Sincerely,



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Chair, Regional Transportation Advisory Council