



BOSTON REGION METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Stephanie Pollack, MassDOT Secretary and CEO and MPO Chair
Karl H. Quackenbush, Executive Director, MPO Staff

MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 19, 2017
TO: Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization
FROM: Karl H. Quackenbush, MPO Executive Director,
and Jennifer M. Rowe, Public Participation Program Manager
RE: Amendment to Public Participation Plan

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) has requested that all metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) in the state amend their public participation plans to shorten the length of the public review and comment period for both draft certification documents and amendments to final certification documents. The following sections provide the language of the proposed amendment and background information for your consideration.

1 PROPOSED MOTION

Staff is proposing that the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization, upon the request of MassDOT, vote to amend its Public Participation Program, to shorten the public review and comment period for both draft certification documents and amendments to final certification documents.

2 AMENDMENT TO PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

The proposed amendment would modify five sentences, in three sections of the Public Participation Program. The proposed changes are shown in red text below:

1. *Chapter 4, Section 1, Page 40*

The MPO discusses the staff recommendations and comments on both the TIP and the UPWP and releases draft documents for a ~~30~~ 21-day public review and comment period.

2. *Chapter 4, Section 2, Page 41*

Although the public participation schedule is different for the LRTP, it follows the same general sequence and set of outreach tools used for the TIP and UPWP, and if possible public participation activities for the LRTP are coordinated with TIP and UPWP outreach. **The MPO releases the draft LRTP for a public review and comment period that is, at minimum, 21 days long.**

3. Chapter 4, Section 3, Page 42

The proposed draft amendment then is posted on the MPO's website and a ~~30~~ 21-day public comment period begins.

4. Chapter 4, Section 3, Page 42

In extraordinary circumstances, such as an unforeseen regulatory requirement or funding deadline, the MPO may vote to shorten the ~~30~~ 21-day public comment period ~~by as much as to a minimum~~ of 15 days.

5. Chapter 4, Section 3, Page 42

An additional comment period of ~~30~~ 21 days will be scheduled if a significant alteration occurs after the close of the initial public comment period.

3 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Reasons for the Proposed Amendment

A 21-day public review and comment period will allow for the Boston Region MPO to shorten the annual Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) development process. This should enable the MPO to annually endorse a final TIP on or before June 1.

MassDOT compiles the regional TIPs prepared by the state's thirteen MPOs into the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Because MassDOT includes the STIP in its Capital Investment Plan (CIP), early approval of each region's TIP would allow MassDOT to develop the two state documents in synch and finalize both by the end of each state fiscal year.

This year, MassDOT's Capital Programs Committee is scheduled to meet on June 8, and the MassDOT Board of Directors and the MBTA's Fiscal and Management Control Board are scheduled to meet on June 12 to vote on the CIP.

Review of Federal Requirements and MPO Guidelines

To inform your consideration of this proposed amendment, staff has attached relevant excerpts from the Federal Metropolitan Planning Rule, as well as the Boston Region MPO's Public Participation Plan. (Please refer to Attachments 1 and 2.)

ATTACHMENT 1

Federal Requirements for Public Participation

§450.316 interested parties, participation, and consultation.

(a) The MPO shall develop and use a documented participation plan that defines a process for providing individuals, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, public ports, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation (including intercity bus operators, employer-based commuting programs, such as carpool program, vanpool program, transit benefit program, parking cash-out program, shuttle program, or telework program), representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.

- 1) The MPO shall develop the participation plan in consultation with all interested parties and shall, at a minimum, describe explicit procedures, strategies, and desired outcomes for:
 - i. Providing adequate public notice of public participation activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP;
 - [...]
 - vii. Seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services;
 - viii. Providing an additional opportunity for public comment, if the final metropolitan transportation plan or TIP differs significantly from the version that was made available for public comment by the MPO and raises new material issues that interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts;
 - ix. Coordinating with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes under subpart B of this part; and
 - x. Periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the participation plan to ensure a full and open participation process.

ATTACHMENT 2

MPO Public Participation Vision and Guidelines

[Public Participation Plan, Chapter 3—The MPO’s Approach to Public Participation, Section 3]

Vision

[Page 26] The MPO’s vision for public participation in the region is to hear, value, and consider—throughout its planning and programming work—the views of and feedback from the full spectrum of the public, and use this input in its decision-making.

Guidelines

[Page 27: *relevant excerpts*] The MPO makes every effort to:

1. Arrange convenient, timely, and meaningful opportunities for public involvement
2. Create a framework that encourages constructive contributions by members of the public to the work and decisions made by the MPO
3. Cast a wide and inclusive net to invite participation of interested parties and the general public: bolster outreach to minority, low-income, elderly, and youth communities, the LEP population, and persons with disabilities
4. Explore strategies for connecting with people who do not use or don’t have ready access to computer