

**Comments Received on UPWP Study Concepts
Between April 1, 2021 and April 29, 2021**



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON, MA 02133-1054

MICHELLE CICCOLO
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
15TH MIDDLESEX DISTRICT

April 8, 2021

Boston MPO
10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150
Boston, MA 02116

RE: Project T-10, Transit Improvement Districts “Innovative Transit Financing”

Dear Secretary Tesla and Members of the Boston MPO:

I write regarding the proposed UPWP Project T-10, “Innovative Transit Financing,” to urge you to strongly consider programming this in the upcoming UPWP funding round or through other discretionary funding available to the Secretary. The objective of this project is to build a body of knowledge that will help catalyze new investment in first mile / last mile transit solutions. As the MPO has observed, there are many small shuttle systems that are launched in an ad-hoc fashion—some with public grants—that succeed or fail based in part on whether a sustainable funding model is developed at the onset of the project. In my experience, successful systems tend to be those where a robust public process has been conducted in advance, which leads to a partnership between the municipality, the state, the private beneficiaries, and the riders to the sites that are served.

All too often, many start-up shuttles fail because not enough meaningful planning is done in advance. Fortunately, there are some promising models that have achieved great success with significant ridership where the new services are making real and meaningful connections to the broader transit system. These successful approaches must be encouraged and developed further, and this study aims to do just that. Through this planning effort, we will be able to review effective models nationally and within Massachusetts. We will also be able to poll RTAs, TMAs, municipalities, and private service providers to learn what has worked well and where there are pitfalls. Both financing models and governance models will be evaluated, and the universe of existing private transit systems in the Commonwealth will be identified to help us better understand where there is existing service coverage and where we may need to expand first mile / last mile opportunities. Through this study, we can identify a financing model, best practices, and state and local policies that could catalyze future private shuttles to become available to the public as true public transit.

The need for better coordinated transit that has sustainable funding is crucial in order for us to meet our Global Warming Solutions Act goals and to transition to net zero emissions by 2050. With 40% of emissions coming out of the transportation sector, everything conceivable must be done to effect mode change and entice riders onto the larger transit system. We cannot meet our mandates without solving the first mile / last mile conundrum. And we cannot solve that without expanding shuttle services with better financing, governance, and policies.

Moreover, the opportunity to vastly reduce emissions from highways through Bus Rapid Transit on highways cannot become a reality until and unless we build out the local connections to and from the cloverleaf interchanges of every node. In other words, there can be no relief on the highways without first solving for the local first mile / last mile connections. With this perspective in mind, it becomes eminently clear that cities and towns will need to collaborate with the state, major landowners, and businesses whose properties draw significant SOV traffic both to create the type of truly comprehensive transit system we will need for a modern economy as well as to clean the air we breathe. We need financing, policy, and governance tools now, and this study will help us develop them.

The social equity and environmental justice need and opportunity here is also enormous. First mile / last mile services can and should be deployed in our low-income and environmental justice communities. This study will help us develop financing models to be able to do so. In addition, most of the riders on these shuttle services are those who either cannot afford a car or cannot drive for some other reason. Connecting these most-vulnerable transit users to larger systems expands job opportunities and access to services for low- and moderate-income residents and those with mobility challenges. Additionally, these shuttles, if deployed, could reach into our rural areas and connect people previously not able to access transit. Finally, for those within 10 minutes of a highway or 20 minutes of existing transit, we can effectuate significant mode-change with these shuttle connections as an alternative. By so doing, we will vastly improve air quality in urban areas and environmental justice neighborhoods. Suburban auto travelers need to get off the highway and onto transit and stop driving into vulnerable neighborhoods, but that will not happen unless we make it more convenient to use transit.

In order to take these points into consideration, the initial draft project ranking ought to be revised in several categories. I believe the Transportation Equity potential of this study ought to render it a rank of a 5, given the many reasons stated above. In addition, the “Clean Air/Sustainable Communities” category ought to be a 5, as the entire focus of this study is creating systems that work for communities in order to improve air quality.

As a corollary to the work of this study, I have filed HD.3648 (and Senator Friedman has filed SD.1943), which outlines a legislative approach to creating Transit Improvement Districts. However, when drafting that legislation, there was still a missing body of knowledge, as-of-yet unavailable, that could have helped tighten and improve the approach of the legislative intent. With this UPWP study work product to inform the policy considerations of that legislation, we will be able to make tremendous progress toward solving the first mile / last mile problem.

Finally, it is worth noting that in the last Transportation Bond Bill, H.5248, I was able to get a Transit Improvement Districts study authorized, which explicitly requires that a study be conducted by the Secretary of Transportation’s office. The reference for this can be found in the Session Laws as Chapter 363 of the Acts of 2020, contained within the appropriation for the MassDOT, Office of the Secretary,

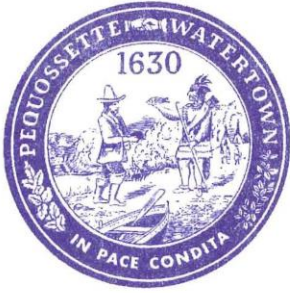
line 6621-2108. The exact language reads: “For the purpose of implementing sustainable transit system modernization investments and rail improvements pursuant to chapter 161A of the General Laws;” wherein the reference is as follows: “provided further, that funds shall be expended for a feasibility study to establish transit improvement districts.” The total funding for this line item is \$3 billion. Thus, there is sufficient funding to carry out this study through the FY20 Budget or funding from the UPWP.

I thank you again for your consideration of this project, and I hope you will help advance this study concept. With the amazing expertise of the Central Transportation Planning Staff, I am extremely hopeful that we can make the progress we must for our air quality and our quality of life.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Ciccolo". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "M".

Michelle Ciccolo
State Representative
15th Middlesex District



Steve Magoon
Director

smagoon@watertown-ma.gov

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April 20, 2021

MPO-UPWP Committee
Boston Region MPO
10 Park Plaza, Rm. 2510
Boston, MA 02115

Re. UPWP 2022

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing in support of Study L-1, Trip Generation Follow-up, and to suggest that the scope of research be expanded to include employment density in the Life Science/Lab industry, in relation to parking needs. Employment density is the average number of employees per 1000 square feet of floor space that can be anticipated, and can be used to help project parking needs.

The Life Science industry is booming. Watertown alone has 12 lab projects in various stages of the development process, plus three newly constructed lab buildings in early stages of occupancy. We are also seeing requests to convert office space to lab space, due to the vast increase in working from home as a result of the Covid pandemic, which is impacting the office market. Yet we really have little guidance about the actual parking needs of this new, fast growing use. The ITE uses a general category for Research and Development, which was developed before the growth in this industry, and is based on national standards. Boston may look different than other parts of the country, as was pointed out in the first Trip Generation study, and this new kind of life science lab may look different too. An additional aspect of the research that would be helpful is to differentiate lab buildings by their access to MBTA, i.e. on a subway line, on a bus line, on commuter rail, or none of the above.

Watertown has been working hard to decrease single occupancy vehicle commuting, and increase biking, transit use, carpooling and use of commuter shuttles. The evidence says that building too much parking works against those efforts. Research on employment density in the Life Science/Lab industry can help communities to right-size the parking for these developments, and achieve our goals of reducing congestion and improving air quality.

Please let me know if you wish to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

Laura Wiener

Laura Wiener
Senior Transportation Planner