

Public Comments Submitted to the Boston Region MPO

April 4, 2024

The following written comment was submitted during the 21-day public comment period for the draft Amendment Five to the FFYs 2024-28 Transportation Improvement Program:

- **General Comment–Rail Trail Projects**
 - One comment, Kurt Marden, Boxborough resident [page 2]

Subject: FFYs 2024-28 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment Five

Message:

I received a request for comments regarding TIP amendment #5 for the 2024-2028. I took the opportunity to review all of the proposed budgets for expenditures on rail-trails.

I find it remarkable and incredibly irresponsible that the MPO feels justified on carrying at least \$80 million dollars of rail trail projects considering the widely acknowledged climate crisis.

The projects that were actually scored (and I question the objectivity of the scoring) are very low in actually reducing the state's GHG emissions and mobility in any meaningful way. These projects simultaneously commit to a non-solution, for all practical purposes, to automotive congestion and the associated greenhouse gas emissions. while destroying the opportunity to create GHG-reducing, practical mass transportation solutions that are desperately needed by Massachusetts. Rail transit solutions are the most efficient way of moving people and goods and can include trails in the right of way. This is an unquestionable fact. The millions spent on rail trail projects to date, if we are being honest, have done virtually NOTHING to meaningfully way reduce highway congestion and reduce the associated GHG emissions.

The reality is, that the MPO seems unable to admit, is that these projects are used by a vanishingly small number percentage of citizens, primarily for recreation and only during fair weather.

This is in stark contrast to the fact that rail transportation operates every day, year round, providing real transportation solutions that reduce GHG and congestion.

The argument that "It's too expensive to restore rail transportation" is a false presumption if we are being honest about the long term benefits of this transportation mode. With climate change already having highly negative impacts to Massachusetts, the time has long past to restore our non-road rail transportation network to actually have any chance of meeting the state's GHG reduction and net-zero goals.

It is up to the MPO to be HONEST and realize that seasonal, recreational trails will not get us to the ambitious environmental goals that the state has. Non-highway mass transportation WILL!

i would appreciate a follow-up response to this comment.