



BOSTON REGION METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Monica Tibbits-Nutt, MPO Chair | Secretary and CEO, Massachusetts Department of Transportation
Tegin Leigh Teich, Executive Director, MPO Staff

TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 8, 2024
TO: Brian Kane, Chair of Administration and Finance Committee
FROM: Tegin Teich, Executive Director of Central Transportation Planning Staff to the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization
RE: State Fiscal Year 2025 Goals and First Quarter Updates

In June of 2024, the executive director, Tegin Teich, completed an annual performance evaluation with Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) representatives, following the process described in the MPO's Operations Plan. The evaluation team included the following:

- The Boston Region MPO's chair's designee: David Mohler, Office of Transportation Planning at the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)
- The Boston Region MPO's vice-chair: Marc Draisen, Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)
- The Chair of the Boston Region MPO's Administration and Finance committee: Brian Kane, MBTA Advisory Board

This memo includes the complete set of State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2025 goals established in the review, a summary of progress towards goals completed in the first quarter (July through September 2024), and existing and anticipated challenges to achieving the intended outcomes.

2 STATE FISCAL YEAR 2025 GOALS

The executive director's evaluation included the following SFY 2025 goals organized by the categories in the agency's Strategic Plan. These have been abbreviated compared to the description in the evaluation.

Identity and Awareness (Sector Leadership/Marketing and Public Presentation)

- Expand forums to speak about the MPO
- Identify funding and implement an identity and branding exercise

Civil Rights, nondiscrimination, and accessibility information is on the last page.

Programs and Services

- Implement the first stage of multi-year planning at the agency
- Continue to develop and engage staff in the agency's overall focus areas to inform the individual multi-year plans
- Align the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) development process to be complimentary to multi-year work planning

Governance

- Embed the Operations Plan into ongoing agency work
- Hold new learning opportunities for board members

Organizational Structure and Staffing

- Refresh the Compensation Plan with improved employee engagement
- Move or renovate the existing office

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

- Fund a significant DEI initiative identified by the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Committee

Funding and Operations

- Complete and sign a fiduciary agent agreement
- Operate neither with a significant deficit or surplus (0-5 percent)
- Identify and bring in one new revenue source (i.e., discretionary grant)
- Continue to build relationships with potential additional partners

1 QUARTER 1 UPDATES

The following section summarizes progress made in the SFY 2025 executive director goal areas in the first three months of the state fiscal year.

1.1 Identity and Awareness

The executive director has participated in new forums as an expert resource in transportation, continuing to increase awareness of the MPO's work. These forums included the following:

- July 2024: Following up on the MPO's reporting on the *Learning from Roadway-Pricing Experiences* study, a discrete-funded study completed in 2024, the executive director was invited to be an expert panelist on a City of Boston Council hearing on congestion. Other panelists included representatives from the Brookings Institute, UCLA, and Transit Matters.
- September 2024: The Barr Foundation hosted a four-part development opportunity for its grantees, primarily nonprofits in Massachusetts. The

executive director presented and fielded questions about the role of MPOs in stewarding the investment of federal transportation dollars to transportation improvements in the region, and how those stakeholders can engage in the process.

- August 2024: The executive director was again invited by YW Boston to participate in its LeadBoston program, a year-long equity training for Boston area professional leaders. The executive director was part of a two-person expert panel, speaking about transportation challenges in the region and the role of MPOs in addressing them.

The Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) annual conference was also an important opportunity to learn from colleagues across the nation and to share perspectives on the unique challenges and opportunities experienced by the Boston Region MPO. The executive director was elected for a second term on the AMPO board, a leadership position with access to federal partners, research institutions, and other MPO leaders.

The MPO requested and received approval from MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning to access de-obligated (previously unspent) PL funds, which are allocated to MPOs, to carry out a branding exercise and website update in federal fiscal year (FFY) 2025 (October 1, 2024, to September 30, 2025). Scoping for those efforts has been ongoing since approval was granted. Each effort is expected to utilize about \$100,000 of the de-obligated PL funds inclusive of a 20 percent match from MassDOT.

1.2 Programs and Services

Motivated by retreat discussions over a year ago, the leadership team (comprised of the executive director, deputy executive director, and four directors) has been working to link the single-year work and resource planning driven by the annual Combined PL and 5030 contracts and annual UPWP development to 20-year goals in the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). Since the 2023 retreat, the leadership team has been establishing new practices to move towards developing near-term emphases (themes) to support progress in work planning towards long-term goals.

During the last six months, the leadership team began requiring multi-year plans for MPO programs. These plans have been rolling out—10 out of 15 scheduled multi-year plans have currently been submitted to the team. In the meantime, the leadership retreat sessions held in September 2025 have focused on the development of an agency-wide, multi-year action plan as a framework for those individual plans. The leadership team has developed a structure and is working

on developing the content and connecting that action plan to budgeting and work planning processes.

1.3 Governance

The MPO Policy and Planning Director and MPO Activities Manager have begun mapping the Operations Plans procedures into agenda planning for the MPO throughout the year. This includes time-sensitive information sharing such as quarterly updates on project readiness.

The executive director was not successful in securing de-obligated funding to support board member participation in the AMPO annual conference. Other resources will need to be identified within the existing budget to support this board member development. In the meantime, resources can also be considered for other forms of board member development, such as a subscription to the new AMPO Institute training materials.

A new board member training (101) is expected to be launched by staff, including the executive director, this calendar year.

1.4 Organizational Structure and Staffing

A full refresh of the Compensation Plan began in August 2024. The original Compensation Plan consultant is being engaged again through an approximately \$15,000 contract. The executive director, deputy executive director, and director of finance and operations are championing the completion of this update before the end of the calendar year. New elements included in this refresh include the following:

- A framework for hourly part-time or per diem pay for highly skilled, senior professionals, including rehiring of retired MPO experts
- Updates and refinements in job classifications and titles for certain roles, including in communications, public engagement, and policy analysis
- More refined benchmarking on individual manager and director roles based on skills and market data
- Consideration of a track or special tiering for highly specialized skill sets

The work to engage with a consultant to develop an RFQ for office leases has been paused due to redirection of legal staff capacity to other work. This effort is being restarted in the beginning of the FFY.

1.5 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Towards the end of the FFY, MPO staff engaged equity consultants in two smaller efforts: to support the DEIA Committee and carry out an initial diagnostic to understand the current situation and recommend a path forward in terms of approaching DEI work. Based on the findings, the Director of Policy and Planning will scope for an organization-wide assessment to identify, define, and develop an action plan to overcome barriers and help achieve goals related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, funded by an initial \$35,000 of de-obligated PL funds.

1.6 Funding and Operations

The process to develop an up-to-date fiduciary agent agreement has been ongoing since the prior SFY and has been a significant effort for both MPO and MAPC staff supporting the legal, human resource, financial, and procurement activities. The primary agreement is close to final, with the appendices describing the above activities still under revision and review.

During the past several months, three new funding sources have been awarded to support additional work. In July, the MPO was awarded a \$150,000 Mobility, Access, and Transportation Insecurity (MATI) grant to design a pilot, partnering with an electric vehicle (EV) carshare company, to use affordable, community EV carsharing to enhance access to a transit-centric, multimodal transportation system for transport-insecure residents. In August, the MPO was awarded more than \$1 million through a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Action Grant. The MPO will carry out this work in partnership with four municipalities and four advocacy organizations in the Boston region. With this grant, the MPO will use high-resolution data sources to identify the heat risk that people walking and biking are exposed to as they travel throughout our region. Then, the MPO will work with partners to plan, design, and implement a pilot geared towards providing mitigation measures. Finally, in September the MPO was awarded a \$7.5 million Safe Streets and Roads for All discretionary grant to conduct supplemental planning and demonstration activities to inform the regional Vision Zero Action Plan that is currently in development. With the 20 percent state match, the total amount is \$9.3 million, with about \$2 million directly supporting MPO staff time.

2 CHALLENGE AREAS AND NEEDS

The challenges and needs for the successful realization of the executive director's goals continue to be in the areas of financial and staff resources, board member engagement and buy-in, and change management.

First, the implementation of goals identified by the executive director requires resources. The access to de-obligated PL funds have enabled the MPO to pursue several important initiatives that otherwise would not be funded. The executive director and staff will continue to pursue additional funding and prioritize the spending of current resources towards accomplishing these goals.

In addition, staff time is already mostly committed to existing MPO work, and new skillsets will be required to carry out significant initiatives such as the Safe Streets and Roads for All supplemental grant including demonstration projects. Additional skills in project management, federal NEPA requirements, and procurement will be necessary to effectively implement these grants. In addition, many of these initiatives have increased the need for fiduciary agent support, particularly from legal, procurement, and human resource staff who also carry out all these activities for MAPC.

The success of the executive director goals is dependent on continued attention and buy-in from board members to implement processes and procedures that have been developed during the last year through the Operations Plan and Memorandum of Understanding update.

Finally, the agency's multi-year action plan represents a culture shift that will involve a multi-year, phased implementation. Significant leadership time beyond the day and a half reserved for this year's retreat will need to be committed to developing an effective strategy to move forward.

These challenges are balanced by the immense opportunity for the continued growth and evolution of the work of the MPO.

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