

MPO Meeting Minutes

Draft Memorandum for the Record

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting

October 10, 2024, Meeting

10:00 AM–11:40 AM, Zoom Video Conferencing Platform

David Mohler, Chair, representing Monica Tibbits-Nutt, Secretary of Transportation and Chief Executive Officer of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

Decisions

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) agreed to the following:

- Approve the minutes of the meeting of August 1, 2024
- Release the Federal Fiscal Years (FFYs) 2025–29 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment One for a 21-day public comment period
- Postpone vote to waive the 21-day public comment period and endorse FFYs 2025–29 TIP Amendment Two until October 24, 2024
- Approve the MBTA Map Support work scope

1. Introductions

See attendance beginning on page 14.

2. Chair’s Report—*David Mohler, MassDOT*

There was none.

3. Executive Director’s Report—*Tegin Teich, Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff*

Tegin Teich, Executive Director, announced the resignations of three MPO staff members: Rounaq Basu, Manager of Multimodal Planning and Design, Sarah Philbrick, Manager of Planning and Policy, and Srilekha Murthy, Unified Planning Work Program Manager.

T. Teich provided an update on the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) conference held in Salt Lake City, Utah, from September 23 to September 27, 2024. T. Teich stated that the conference was an opportunity for MPO staff members to connect with other MPOs and state and federal colleagues across the country. In addition, T. Teich was elected to serve another term on AMPO’s board. Sample topics the conference covered included the following:

- Public transit planning and implementation
- Challenges in achieving Vision Zero
- Links between housing and land use
- Scenario planning for long-range plans
- Innovative engagement
- Innovative uses of technology and data
- Creating quality core products

T. Teich highlighted three plenary sessions, including a panel of key figures speaking about coordination across agencies, the keynote speaker, and updates on legal issues concerning landmark Supreme Court rulings and how they affect MPOs' approaches to equity. T. Teich stated that the conference highlighted the effectiveness of working together, identifying common goals, and conducting difficult conversations to work towards long-range goals.

T. Teich also listed AMPO's legislative priorities, including the following:

- Increased planning funds
- Reduced local match requirements
- Shifting discretionary to formula-based funding
- Direct recipient status
- Carrying over federal funds

T. Teich also highlighted recent AMPO publications, including an updated Policy Roadmap document, a primer on the Highway Trust Fund, and a new survey report on the use of discretionary grants, including insights into MPOs working to access those funds.

T. Teich reminded board members to sign the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) document prior to the October 24, 2024, MPO board meeting.

T. Teich announced that MPO staff selected the corridors and intersections for the FFY 2025 Multimodal Mobility Infrastructure Program, including the following locations:

- Route 114 corridor in Salem
- Commerce Way at Presidential Way and Atlantic Avenue in Woburn
- Route 1 at High Plain Street (Route 27) in Walpole

T. Teich summarized the meeting agenda, which included three action items and three presentations.

Lenard Diggins, Regional Transportation Advisory Council, asked for further information on the selection process for the corridor and intersection studies.

Seth Asante, MPO staff, responded that a memo will be posted publicly regarding the selection process. Staff assessed multiple corridors and intersections for safety and other criteria and selected three for further study.

4. Public Comments

Jarred Johnson, TransitMatters, commented on FFYs 2025–29 TIP Amendment Two, particularly the request to waive the 21-day public comment period and the programming of Project 606475: Boston—Replacement of Allston I-90 Elevated Viaduct B-16-359, Including Interchange Reconstruction, Beacon Park Yard Layover and West Station. J. Johnson stated that adding a \$2 million project to the TIP without the public comment period is unprecedented, particularly considering the project’s unresolved community concerns. J. Johnson suggested that the project be added to the FFYs 2026–30 TIP to allow time to resolve the issues.

5. Committee Chairs’ Reports

Jen Rowe, City of Boston, announced the TIP Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee’s kick-off meeting on October 17, 2024, where Ethan Lapointe, MPO staff, will present the key dates in TIP development and items from the last TIP development cycle.

6. Regional Transportation Advisory Council Report—*Lenard Diggins, Chair, Regional Transportation Advisory Council*

L. Diggins stated that the Advisory Council had a good meeting on October 9, 2024, and that the next meeting date will have both in-person and virtual options for attendance. The date of the next meeting is still to be announced.

7. Action Item: Approval of August 1, 2024, MPO Meeting Minutes Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

1. August 1, 2024, MPO Meeting Minutes ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

Vote

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of August 1, 2024, was made by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) (Eric Bourassa) and seconded by the Town of Arlington (John Alessi). The motion carried.

8. Action Item: FFYs 2025-29 TIP Amendment One—*Ethan Lapointe, MPO Staff*

Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

1. FFYs 2025–29 TIP Amendment One ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

E. Lapointe presented FFYs 2025–29 TIP Amendment One, which includes changes to the FFY 2025 Earmark Discretionary and Regional Target Programs, including the following:

- Reflects Amendment 13 of the FFYs 2024–28 TIP to program the Peabody Independence Greenway Extension and two MPO-funded transit projects in FFY 2025
- Reprograms earmarks and discretionary grants from FFY 2024
- New grant awards under federal Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) and Charging and Fueling Infrastructure programs
- Delays a project from FFY 2025 of the Regional Target Program to FFY 2026
- Corrects text in Chapter 3 of the TIP document to address inconsistencies between document versions and missing or incorrect data

E. Lapointe stated that the public comment period will begin on Monday, October 14, 2024, and end on November 4, 2024, at 5:00 PM.

Discussion

Ken Miller, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), stated that not all the new discretionary grants are included in the amendment and asked why they were not included.

E. Lapointe responded that the discretionary grants included in Amendment One were requested to be programmed into the TIP by the municipalities, and the amendment does not include all the discretionary grants that could have been programmed.

L. Diggins asked what the difference was between programming and obligating projects.

E. Lapointe responded that obligation occurs after the project is programmed.

E. Lapointe explained that the projects were previously programmed in a prior TIP but were not advertised during that period, and they are functionally being delayed into a later fiscal year.

L. Diggins asked if the discretionary grants included in the amendment were ones that AMPO was considering changing from discretionary to formula grants.

T. Teich stated that there are some discretionary grant opportunities that AMPO feels could be well-positioned to shift into formula funding, such as the SS4A grant program which generates large influxes of funding for regional action plans. T. Teich stated that an ongoing stream of funding for regional action planning could be beneficial for MPOs.

David Mohler, MassDOT, asked how MPO staff determined which of the two delayed projects would be funded.

E. Lapointe responded that the Peabody Independence Greenway Extension Project was initially programmed in FFY 2024 and was addressed in FFYs 2024–28 TIP Amendment 13, which allowed Regional Target funding to be reallocated between fiscal years. However, the information for the other project, Woburn and Burlington—Intersection Reconstruction at Route 3 (Cambridge Road) and Bedford Road and South Bedford Street, was only indicated after Amendment 13 had taken place. In addition, there were no large-scale transit projects with advanced construction funding between FFYs 2025 and 2026.

Vote

A motion to vote to release FFYs 2025–29 TIP Amendment One for a 21-day public comment period was made by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) (Eric Bourassa) and seconded by the City of Boston (J. Rowe). The motion carried.

9. Action Item: FFYs 2025-29 TIP Amendment Two—*Ethan Lapointe, MPO Staff*

Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

1. FFYs 2025–29 TIP Amendment Two ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

E. Lapointe presented FFYs 2025–29 TIP Amendment Two, which programs a portion of an FFY 2023 Reconnecting Community and Neighborhoods Grant for early action items on Project 606475: Boston—Replacement of Allston I-90 Elevated Viaduct B-16-359, Including Interchange Reconstruction, Beacon Park Yard Layover and West Station. Amendment Two would program \$10.3 million of the \$335.3 million grant within the FFY 2025 Earmark Discretionary Program.

Discussion

J. Rowe stated that the City of Boston understands how important and potentially transformative this project is, and the City has appreciated working with MassDOT and the task force. J. Rowe asked if MPO staff could clarify the use these funds in FFY 2025 for the early action items and describe the reasoning for waiving the public comment period.

D. Mohler stated that the MPO's processes do not allow for a shortened public comment period less than 15 days and, therefore, there could either be a 21-day public comment period or no public comment period in this case. D. Mohler stated that the goal for waiving the public comment period is to demonstrate the project's progress to its federal partners and other stakeholders.

D. Mohler stated that the funding will be allocated toward preliminary design, utility relocation, and possibly an investigation into right-of-way issues, particularly related to the Cambridge Street Bridge project.

In addition, D. Mohler stated that MassDOT recognizes that the project still has a lot of unresolved issues and requesting to waive the public comment period is not an attempt to avoid it. D. Mohler also stated that the amendment only concerns the Cambridge Street Bridge aspect of the project, which is now consistent with the requests of the City of Boston.

Matt Moran, City of Boston, reiterated J. Rowe's perspective and expressed appreciation for MassDOT's collaboration on this project with the City of Boston.

M. Moran also expressed the importance of the public discussion period and asked for a delay until November 14, 2024.

D. Mohler responded that the amendment's purpose is to demonstrate progress and that MassDOT would prefer not to delay the amendment. D. Mohler also stated that a delay until November 14, 2024, would not resolve any of the project's outstanding issues.

E. Bourassa stated that it seems there is a strong desire to obligate a portion of the project funding and demonstrate commitment to the project despite administrative changes. E. Bourassa stated that MAPC would support waiving the public comment period if MassDOT could present an update on the project at a future board meeting.

D. Mohler stated that MassDOT can prepare a presentation and that it would be discussed in an agenda-setting meeting.

L. Diggins expressed support for the idea of a presentation in lieu of a public comment period and understanding of MassDOT's position with respect to waiving the public comment period. L. Diggins also suggested adjusting the MPO's public comment period to be 10 days to allow for additional flexibility.

D. Mohler stated that MassDOT supports the idea of amending the MPO's public comment process to allow for a shortened public comment period and that he and E. Bourassa would work with T. Teich on this issue.

L. Diggins also stated that MPO members can encourage members of the public to make public comments at the board meetings.

Tom Bent, Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville), expressed concern for waiving the public comment period and supported the City of Boston's viewpoint on preserving transparency and giving members of the public the right to comment on these issues. T. Bent also stated that in the updated Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Operations Plan there may be an opportunity to include a shortened public comment period. T. Bent also expressed support for an update and presentation on the project for board members.

K. Miller expressed appreciation for MassDOT's commitment to progressing the project in an expedited fashion and stated that the project is very important for the region. K. Miller also stated that members of the task force for the project are having detailed conversations about the project's issues, many of which have been resolved over time. K. Miller stated that there are four working groups within the task force assigned to specific design issues for the project and that there will be a few more years of work until the design is finalized. K. Miller also stated that grant programs have deadlines regarding when funding can be obligated, and the funding for the preliminary design can be obligated prior to the completion of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements.

In addition, K. Miller stated that the project is high-profile, and this amendment shows progress to regional and national stakeholders. K. Miller stated that FHWA would appreciate the MPO's support in moving forward with the amendment in an expedited fashion.

J. Rowe expressed appreciation for the additional context from FHWA and MassDOT on the reasoning for waiving the public comment period and proposed postponing voting on Amendment Two until the next meeting. J. Rowe cited the Operations Plan, which states that if relevant information is not available 48 hours before the meeting, board members may request to postpone the vote until the next meeting. J. Rowe stated that in lieu of an official public comment period, postponing could allow board members and members of the public to review the amendment and the additional information learned in the discussion and ask any additional questions before the board officially votes on Amendment Two.

D. Mohler stated that postponing the vote until the next meeting would not affect MassDOT's timeline for the project.

Jay Monty, City of Everett, expressed support for J. Rowe's proposal and stated that the discussion is missing context from the MBTA on this project and where the MBTA stands on this issue.

Sandy Johnston, MBTA, stated that the MBTA is happy to work with the chair and vice chair to arrange for the MBTA to give their perspective at a future board meeting.

E. Lapointe stated that MPO staff could accommodate moving the vote to the October 24, 2024, board meeting.

Vote

A motion to postpone the vote to waive the 21-day public comment and endorse FFYs 2025–29 TIP Amendment Two to October 24, 2024, was made by the City of Everett (J. Monty) and seconded by the Town of Arlington (John Alessi). The motion carried.

10. Action Item: Work Scope for MBTA Map Support—Ken Dumas, MPO Staff

Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

1. MBTA Maps Support Work Scope ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

Ken Dumas, MPO staff, presented a work scope to continue conducting MBTA map support, which includes updating the MBTA's system map and bus schedule map on a quarterly basis. K. Dumas stated that it is a three-year work scope with a total cost of \$18,000 and an expenditure of no more than \$6,000 per year.

Discussion

David Koses, City of Newton, asked if the budget was large enough for this project, especially considering the upcoming bus schedule changes and the addition of bus shelters that may result in additional mapping work.

K. Dumas responded that there is a different funding source for a separate project that MPO staff are working on, which includes the bus network redesign work. K. Dumas stated that any changes to the maps have either been completed in phase one of the separate project or will be completed in future phases with a different scope. K. Dumas stated that the work scope presented is only for ongoing regular maintenance that is unrelated to the bus network redesign.

Vote

A motion to approve the MBTA Map Support work scope was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the Advisory Council (L. Diggins). The motion carried.

11. MPO Board Election Nomination Update—*Eric Bourassa, Metropolitan Area Planning Council*

E. Bourassa stated that the MPO election nominations window closed this past Monday, and there are four seats up for election:

- One municipality from the Three Rivers Interlocal Council (TRIC) subregion
- One municipality from the North Suburban Planning Council (NSPC) subregion
- One town from any part of the Boston Region MPO area for the At-Large Town seat
- One city from any part of the Boston Region MPO area for the At-Large City seat

The At-Large City seat is a contested race; both the City of Newton and the City of Chelsea are running. The Town of Arlington is running for the At-Large Town seat unopposed. The Town of Norwood is running for the TRIC subregional representative seat unopposed. The Town of Burlington is running for the NSPC subregional representative seat unopposed.

E. Bourassa announced that there will be an At-Large City Virtual Candidates' Forum on Thursday, October 17, 2024, at 3:00 PM on Zoom.

E. Bourassa also stated that ballots would be sent out by Tuesday, October 15, 2024, and the voting will close on November 6, 2024. The election results will be announced, and the elected members will be seated at the MPO's Annual Meeting on November 14, 2024.

Discussion

John Romano, MassDOT Highway Division, asked if a link to the At-Large City Virtual Candidates' Forum could be sent out to board members.

E. Bourassa responded that MPO staff can do that and that the link is currently posted to the MPO calendar.

D. Mohler asked for clarification on who votes for the At-Large City Seat.

E. Bourassa responded that all of the municipalities in the region vote for both of the At-Large seats and just the subregional municipalities vote for the subregional representative seats.

12. Operations Plan Review—*Dave Hong and Erin Maguire, MPO Staff Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar*

1. Operations Plan Update ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

Dave Hong, MPO staff, stated that the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Update Committee was tasked with revising both the MOU document and the Operations Plan. The Operations Plan includes the processes and logistics by which the MPO's commitments outlined in the MOU are fulfilled.

Revisions to the Operations Plan and the MOU were reviewed and refined by the ten Committee members with input and collaboration with the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA), the Cape Ann Transportation Authority (CATA), the MBTA, and MassDOT.

Erin Maguire, MPO staff, summarized the changes to the MOU, including changes in the following categories:

- Relocated text from Memorandum of Understanding
- Text clarifications
- Board education
- Agency information sharing

E. Maguire reviewed content that was relocated from the MOU into the Operations Plan. These sections included the following:

- Section 3.3.III.C
 - Meeting location requirements
- Section 8.2.IV–V
 - Universe of Projects
 - First-tier list of unfunded priority projects
- Section 8.4.I.A–C
 - MARPA funding distribution
 - Accelerated Bridge Program
 - Road and Bridge Program

E. Maguire summarized the instances where text was clarified in the Operations Plan, including the following:

- Boston Region MPO board officers
- Vice chair election vote
- References to the previous MOU and Operations Plan

- Reference to the regional transit authority (RTA) board seat
- Regional Transportation Advisory Council

E. Maguire then reviewed changes to details related to board member education, which included adding opportunities for board members to engage with industry best practices, such as webinars, online resources, presentations, peer exchanges, and conference attendance.

Lastly, E. Maguire summarized changes related to agency information sharing, which included an updated outline for processes for MPO staff to obtain information for MassDOT, MBTA, MWRTA, and CATA projects.

D. Hong asked board members to provide comments on the revised Operations Plan by October 16, 2024. MPO staff will request a motion to approve the Operations Plan at the October 24, 2024, board meeting.

13. Federal Highway Grant Recipient Update—*Ken Miller, Federal Highway Administration*

K. Miller presented on Boston Region MPO discretionary grant awards and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). K. Miller stated that the reauthorization for the BIL occurred in 2022 and funds programs for FFYs 2022–26. It includes more than a dozen new highway programs, including both formula and discretionary programs. K. Miller presented a table of some of the discretionary programs and indicated the range of recipients for each one.

K. Miller stated that if a recipient is selected for a grant program, there are two alternative reimbursement funding mechanisms, including a grant agreement with FHWA or a contract through MassDOT. Recipients of the SS4A grant program must be a direct recipient and cannot form a contract through MassDOT. K. Miller additionally clarified that earmarks must be passed through MassDOT because MassDOT is the recipient of earmark funding.

K. Miller stated that direct recipients and MassDOT subrecipients of discretionary grants must conform with all applicable federal laws and regulations, including the following:

- Matching funds
- Project programmed on TIP/STIP
- NEPA
- Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act (Uniform Act)
- Davis-Bacon Act
- Buy America

- Disadvantaged Business Enterprise contract goals
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act
- Americans with Disabilities Act
- Brooks Act

K. Miller presented a table of all the SS4A discretionary grant awards in the Boston region, including the type of SS4A program. K. Miller clarified that SS4A demonstration grants are for temporary, quick-build treatments on roadways. K. Miller stated that applicants can apply for a combination of demonstration, supplemental, and planning grants, and that there are a variety of recipients that have combined different types of SS4A grants.

K. Miller presented a table of the non-SS4A discretionary grant awards in the Boston region, including the following programs:

- Advanced Transportation Technology and Innovation
- Charging and Fueling Infrastructure
- Electric Vehicle Charger Reliability and Replacement
- Neighborhood Access and Equity
- Reconnecting Communities Pilot
- Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation

K. Miller directed interested parties to visit the FHWA's website to learn more information about the BIL.

Discussion

E. Bourassa stated that some of the grant programs allow proponents of high scoring, previously submitted applications to resubmit their applications without competing against new applications. E. Bourassa asked K. Miller if FHWA was considering this internally.

K. Miller stated that there are about 40 different programs with their own requirements, and it is difficult to keep track of the projects that different program offices oversee.

K. Miller stated that in previous years project applications exceeded available funding, resulting in some good projects not getting funding in the first or second round of applications. K. Miller stated that one program included a set-aside for projects from the previous year that were not initially funded. K. Miller suggested reading the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for more information on specific grants.

J. Rowe stated that the City of Boston resubmitted a high-scoring application for a grant and encouraged others in similar situations to do the same.

K. Miller added that each NOFO should include the criteria for scoring applications.

14. Members' Items

There were none.

15. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the City of Boston (J. Rowe). The motion carried.

Attendance

Members	Representatives and Alternates
At-Large City (City of Everett)	Jay Monty
At-Large City (City of Newton)	David Koses
At-Large Town (Town of Arlington)	John Alessi
At-Large Town (Town of Brookline)	Erin Chute
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	Jen Rowe
	Matthew Moran
Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)	Ken Miller
Federal Transit Administration (FTA)	Kirstie Tirandazi
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
	Brad Rawson
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)	Sandy Johnston
Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)	David Mohler
	Derek Krevat
MassDOT Highway Division	John Bechard
	John Romano
MBTA Advisory Board	Hanna Switekowski
Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)	Eric Bourassa
	Julia Wallerice
MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham)	Dennis Giombetti
Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Acton)	Kaila Sauer
North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly)	Darlene Wynne
North Suburban Planning Council (Town of Burlington)	Melisa Tintocalis
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Lenard Diggins

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Paul Cobuzzi	Belmont resident
Eric Gemperline	Federal Highway Administration
Judith Gibson-Okunieff	MassDOT
Miranda Briseño	MassDOT
Andrew Wang	MassDOT
Chris Klem	MassDOT
Stephanie Abundo	MassDOT
Cheryll-Ann Senior	MassDOT
Derek Shooster	MassDOT
Michelle Scott	MassDOT
Josh Ostroff	MBTA
Tyler Terrasi	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority
Joy Glynn	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority
Benjamin Coulombe	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority
Jim Nee	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority
Nathaniel Ryan	Town of Acton
Jarred Johnson	TransitMatters

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Tegin Teich, Executive Director

Abby Cutrumbes

Adriana Jacobsen

Ali Kleyman

Annette Demchur

Betsy Harvey

Bradley Putnam

Dave Hong

Erin Maguire

Ethan Lapointe

Judy Day

Kenneth Dumas

Lauren Magee

Meghan O'Connor

Priyanka Chapekar

Rebecca Morgan

Rounaq Basu

Sarah Philbrick

Sean Rourke

Seth Asante

Srilekha Murthy

Stella Jordan

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