

MPO Meeting Minutes

Draft Memorandum for the Record

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting

December 19, 2024, Meeting

10:00 AM–11:27 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 November 14, 2024
- Approve the work scope for the MBTA Ferry Service Equity Analysis
- Endorse *Destination 2050* Amendment One, an amendment to the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)
- Endorse Federal Fiscal Years (FFYs) 2025–29 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment Four
- Endorse FFYs 2025–29 TIP Amendment Six and waive the 21-day public comment period

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

See attendance beginning on page 14.

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

David Mohler, MassDOT, stated that at the last MPO board meeting, members tabled a motion to amend the TIP to include a bundle of early action items on the Allston I-90 Multimodal Project. D. Mohler stated that MassDOT has since decided that the motion cannot be carried forward, and it was removed from the meeting agenda. D. Mohler thanked board members for their support.

Jen Rowe, City of Boston, reiterated D. Mohler's support and appreciation, and expressed disappointment that the motion could not move forward. J. Rowe stated that the City of Boston still sees value in a subset of the project's early action items moving more quickly and asked if MassDOT is still pursuing opportunities to move a subset forward.

D. Mohler stated that MassDOT will continue to work with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) on possibilities to move forward on any part of the Allston I-90 Multimodal Project in advance of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) determination. D. Mohler stated that the Cambridge Street Bridge Project will not be one that moves forward in advance of NEPA.

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

Tegin Teich presented updates regarding MPO staff. T. Teich announced that Rounaq Basu, the Manager of Multimodal and Design, would have his last day at the MPO on December 31, 2024. In addition, two new staff members would be joining the MPO on January 6, 2025:

- Dorcas Okaidjah, Senior Transportation Planner, Multimodal Planning and Design Group
- Olivia Saccocia, Regional Planner focused on the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), MPO Activities Group

In addition, T. Teich announced that a new Manager of the Planning and Policy team would be joining MPO staff on January 27, 2025:

- Elena Ion, Manager of Planning and Policy, MPO Planning and Policy Group

T. Teich gave an update on engagement for the Vision Zero program and stated that MPO staff are collecting feedback on safety concerns through a public survey and online comment map, which will remain open until the end of January. T. Teich encouraged board members to help MPO staff share the survey with their communities.

T. Teich reviewed the agenda for the meeting, which included four action items and two presentations.

T. Teich reminded members of the upcoming MPO meetings on January 16 and February 6, 2025. T. Teich stated that the January 2, 2025, meeting is canceled.

4. Public Comments

There were none.

5. Committee Chairs' Reports

J. Rowe stated that the TIP Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee would be meeting today at 1:00 PM. J. Rowe stated that MPO staff would share a first look at the TIP Universe of Projects. J. Rowe stated that MPO staff anticipate an increase in

applications, and MPO staff will walk committee members through the first readiness update. J. Rowe stated that MPO staff would also present on how our current TIP criteria treat compliance with the MBTA Communities Law as well as several approaches that the board may consider as more municipalities reach their deadline for compliance. J. Rowe stated that the next TIP Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee meeting would be held on March 13, 2025, at 1:00 PM.

6. Action Item: Approval of November 14, 2024, MPO Meeting Minutes Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

1. November 14, 2024, MPO Meeting Minutes ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

Vote

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of November 14, 2024, was made by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) (Eric Bourassa) and seconded by the City of Boston (J. Rowe). The motion carried.

**7. Action Item: Work Scope: MBTA Ferry Service Equity Analysis—
Sophie Fox, MPO Staff**

Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

1. MBTA Ferry Service Equity Analysis Work Scope ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

Sophie Fox, MPO staff, presented the work scope for MBTA Ferry Service Equity Analysis, which will evaluate the impacts of introducing three new MBTA ferry routes. S. Fox stated that the study has a budget of \$62,000, and funding will come from an MBTA project. The work is projected to last four months after it commences.

S. Fox stated that the MBTA is subject to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which protects people from discrimination based on race, color, and national origin. S. Fox stated that when the MBTA introduces a new service, it is required to perform a service equity analysis to ensure that this new service does not have adverse effects, which are defined as disparate impacts on populations protected due to race or ethnicity or disproportionate burdens on low-income populations. S. Fox stated that the MBTA recently introduced three new seasonal ferry routes into service and has requested that MPO staff evaluate whether the new service has created adverse effects on these protected populations.

S. Fox stated that MPO staff will evaluate this through the change in the amount of service provided, as measured by revenue vehicle hours, and the change in system coverage measured by the percentage of the population that lives within half a mile of an MBTA ferry station.

MPO staff will develop scenarios that represent the system before and after the service change and evaluate relevant demographic data to measure potential disparate impacts or disproportionate burdens.

Discussion

Nayeli Rodriguez, City of Boston, asked if this analysis is on a change that has already been made or an upcoming change to the MBTA's ferry routes.

S. Fox stated that the new service is already in place.

N. Rodriguez asked what actions would take place based on the results of the analysis.

S. Fox responded that MPO staff will not take any action, and the results will be presented to the MBTA.

Sandy Johnston, MBTA, stated that the analysis is taking place now because the new routes have been in place long enough to do an equity analysis.

David Perry, MBTA, stated that the routes have run as seasonal pilots for portions of the last few years. D. Perry stated that as the MBTA investigates expanding the ferry routes, the MBTA needs to conduct its equity analysis on these changes.

Vote

A motion to approve the work scope for the MBTA Ferry Service Equity Analysis was made by the Regional Transportation Advisory Council (Lenard Diggins) and seconded by the MAPC (E. Bourassa). The motion carried.

8. Action Item: *Destination 2050* Amendment One—Erin Maguire, MPO Staff

Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

1. Destination 2050 Amendment One Memo ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

Erin Maguire, MPO staff, presented *Destination 2050* Amendment One, which includes the addition of the MBTA's Green Line Transformation project bundle to the Recommended Projects list in the LRTP. The project bundle has an estimated total project cost of \$3.3 billion, and the MBTA is pursuing half of this cost through the Federal Transit Administration's Capital Investment Grants Core Capacity Program. E. Maguire stated that there is no impact on the availability of the MPO's discretionary Regional Target funds.

E. Maguire stated that there were no public comments received during the public comment period.

Vote

A motion to endorse *Destination 2050* Amendment One was made by the City of Boston (J. Rowe) and seconded by the MAPC (E. Bourassa). The motion carried.

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

Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

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

Ethan Lapointe, MPO staff, presented FFYs 2025–29 TIP Amendment Four, which includes changes to the FFY 2025 Statewide Highway Program, FFY 2025 Earmark Discretionary Program, and FFYs 2025 through 2029 of the Transit Program.

Amendment Four incorporates a cost reduction on an interstate resurfacing and bridge preservation contract on Interstate 93 and Interstate 95 and a cost increase for resurfacing Route 9 in Brookline and Newton. In addition, the amendment programs a discretionary grant award for the City of Boston.

E. Lapointe stated that the changes to the Transit Program reflect a listing of projects the MBTA is seeking funding for through a federal discretionary program alongside other formula changes within its Capital Investment Plan. These changes were also included in *Destination 2050* Amendment One.

E. Lapointe stated that the public comment period began on Monday, November 25, 2024, and ended on December 16, 2024. MPO staff received no public comments.

Discussion

J. Rowe expressed appreciation for board members and MPO staff for helping to prepare for and execute this amendment among many others.

Vote

A motion to endorse FFYs 2025–29 TIP Amendment Four was made by the MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) (Tom Bent). The motion carried.

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

Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

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

E. Lapointe presented FFYs 2025–29 TIP Amendment Six, which includes a change to the FFY 2025 Earmark Discretionary Program to program a Congestion Relief Grant for MassDOT, MAPC, and the City of Boston.

Amendment Six adds Project S13160: MassDOT, MAPC, Boston–Leveraging Innovative Networks to Keep Urban Pathways Uncongested (LINKUP) in Greater Boston (FFY 2024 Congestion Relief Grant). E. Lapointe stated that the project would expand local public transit and the regional Bluebikes system. The award amount is for \$21.6 million with \$5.4 million in matching funds from state and local sources.

Discussion

E. Bourassa reiterated that the project would promote the expansion of the Bluebikes system, new transit services in the City of Boston, and development of a trip planning and payment application, and that there is a component related to incentives for mode shift from single-occupancy vehicles to transit. E. Bourassa stated that the majority of the funding will go towards the Bluebikes system. The project will include adding 290 pedal bikes, 32 new Bluebikes stations, 90 electric bikes, and 32 electrified Bluebikes stations.

Matt Moran, City of Boston, stated that the project would support connecting first- and last-mile destinations within Boston and connect residents to the rapid transit network.

L. Diggins asked about the MAPC narrative.

E. Lapointe stated that it may not have been posted in the appropriate location, but that it will be posted on the meeting calendar after the meeting.

L. Diggins asked for further information on the resource discipline associated with the project.

E. Bourassa responded that it has not been completely developed, but the focus will be on a body of work that investigates various incentives to encourage mode shift from single-occupancy vehicles to transit. E. Bourassa stated that whether the focus will be on the inner core or the entire Boston region is yet to be determined.

In addition, E. Bourassa stated that the MAPC is still having conversations with FHWA about the grant.

Vote

A motion to endorse FFYs 2025–29 TIP Amendment Six and waive the 21-day public comment period was made by the MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the Advisory Council (L. Diggins). The motion carried.

11. Quarterly TIP Update—Project Overview and Updates on McGrath Boulevard Construction—Chris Cameron, MassDOT Highway Division *Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar*

1. MassDOT McGrath Boulevard Construction Update ([pdf](#))

Chris Cameron, MassDOT Highway Division, presented a project overview and update on the McGrath Boulevard Construction project in Somerville.

C. Cameron provided background information on the project and stated that the project extends along McGrath Highway from the southern extent at Third Street in Cambridge to Broadway in Somerville. The project design is split into three segments:

- North: Broadway to MBTA Lowell Line Bridge
- Central: MBTA Lowell Line Bridge to Squire’s Bridge
- South: Squire’s Bridge to Third Street (Cambridge)

In addition, the project is adjacent to the following Somerville neighborhoods:

- East Somerville
- Union Square
- Brickbottom
- Winter Hill
- Prospect Hill

C. Cameron stated that in 2011, MassDOT identified the McCarthy Overpass as needing replacement. In 2012, the Grounding McGrath study recommended its removal and replacement with street-level multimodal infrastructure. In 2015, MassDOT convened the McGrath Boulevard Project Development Working Group. In 2018, the McGrath Boulevard Project was included in the regional transportation plan. Since 2021, MassDOT has been working towards 25 percent design, which is currently under review. The McGrath Boulevard Project is programmed for federal and state funding starting in the FFY 2027 TIP.

C. Cameron reviewed public outreach initiatives, which included the following:

- Eight working group meetings
- Two public information meetings
- Ten targeted briefings
- Coordination with Livable Streets Alliance and MassDOT District Offices
- Appearances by project team members at Tufts University and Somerville ArtBeat festival

C. Cameron stated that these public engagement efforts emphasized the preference for an alternative and aided in programming the project into the FFY 2027 TIP.

C. Cameron reviewed the following reasons for the project:

- The McCarthy Viaduct overpass is structurally deficient.
- McGrath Highway is overbuilt for the number of vehicles that need to use it.
- Accessibility standards are not met along the corridor.

The project's goals included the following:

- Safety improvements to support Vision Zero objectives
- Improve neighborhood connections to nearby amenities
- Improve facilities supporting sustainable transportation
- Resilient infrastructure to face our changing climate
- Accessible design that removes barriers

C. Cameron presented proposed design changes to McGrath Boulevard, including removing a slip lane, lane configuration changes, implementation of bus lanes, reduced turning lanes, improved bike lanes, and additional green space.

C. Cameron stated that the project cost, as of the 25 percent design phase, is \$123,448,000. This includes \$18.6 million for the North Segment, \$92.6 million for the Central Segment, and \$12.3 million for the Southern Segment.

C. Cameron stated that MassDOT applied for the Reconnecting Communities Discretionary Grant Program for the Central Segment of McGrath for \$43.15 million and are anticipating results of the grant application in early 2025.

C. Cameron stated that the 25 percent design, state right-of-way plans, and environmental review checklist were submitted on October 18, 2024.

C. Cameron presented the following estimated timeline for the remainder of the project:

- Summer 2025
 - Design public hearing
 - Present full 25 percent design
- 2025–26
 - 75 percent design
 - Project coordination
 - Plan development
 - Environmental review
 - 75 percent right-of-way
- 2026–27
 - Complete environmental review
 - 100 percent design
 - Complete right-of-way
 - Prepare bid package
- Beginning in 2027
 - Advertisement
 - Bid review
 - Select contractor
 - Notice to proceed

Ongoing efforts include engagement with stakeholders, environmental justice neighborhoods, the City of Somerville, and the City of Cambridge, and conducting information meetings.

Discussion

Brad Rawson, Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville), stated that there is a deep and historic partnership between MassDOT and the City of Somerville on the McGrath Boulevard project that dates to at least 2002. B. Rawson stated that he has been working on this project since 2007, and the project was integrated into the MPO's Long-Range Transportation Plan in 2015. B. Rawson stated that 2024 has been exceptionally productive and collaborative for the project, especially in the development of the 25 percent design. B. Rawson expressed appreciation for everyone working on the project.

T. Bent stated that the project is very impressive, and it incorporates Green Line stops that promote development. T. Bent stated that the project will transform a section of the City of Somerville and expressed appreciation for the work that has gone into the project.

Chris Dilorio, South Shore Coalition (Town of Hull), expressed gratitude for everyone working on the McGrath Boulevard project who kept the project progressing.

Melisa Tintocalis, North Suburban Planning Council (Town of Burlington), stated that the project used to be considered unattainable, and it is exciting to see its progress.

M. Tintocalis expressed appreciation for those consistently working on the project.

12. Quarterly TIP Update—Project Overview and Updates on Rutherford Avenue Project—*Vineet Gupta, City of Boston*

Vineet Gupta, City of Boston, presented updates to Project 606226: Boston Reconstruction of Rutherford Avenue, from City Square to Sullivan Square.

V. Gupta stated that Rutherford Avenue, particularly Sullivan Square, is at the nexus of several inter-municipal planning and design efforts. These efforts include the MBTA's bus network redesign, which will introduce three new high-frequency routes with service every eight to 15 minutes a day. In addition, there are connections to the regional bike network.

V. Gupta stated that the City of Boston has been working closely with the Charlestown neighborhood. The project aims to promote better connectivity for the neighborhood, improve safety at pedestrian crossings, create access to open space, invest in traffic engineering to deter cut-through traffic, increase resiliency in areas prone to flooding, and expand the tree canopy.

V. Gupta presented the current draft concept design of Rutherford Avenue at Sullivan Square, which included the following aspects:

- Center-running bus lanes on Rutherford Avenue with connections to Sullivan Station and additional turn lanes
- Bus lanes and a bike path along the western edge connecting to Alford Street Bridge with separated travel lanes
- A two-way bicycle path on the neighborhood side of Rutherford Avenue
- Coordination with the MBTA Maintenance Facility and consideration for the route of buses accessing the Sullivan Square Station Busway
- Coordination with the Ryan Playground design and new development projects

V. Gupta reviewed the draft concept design for Rutherford Avenue at Austin Street, which included the following design aspects:

- Center-running bus lanes with two general traffic lanes in each direction and three travel lanes at intersections
- Safe, comfortable bike lanes including a two-way path on the neighborhood side of Rutherford Avenue with connections to Gilmore and North Washington Street Bridges

- Coordination with ongoing design for Gilmore Bridge
- Coordination with Community College and development parcels on the western side of the corridor
- Coordination with improvements to Thompson Square at Main Street

V. Gupta stated that the City of Boston modeled the drafted design using a 30-year “full build out” scenario as well as regional long-term growth projections from MPO staff’s regional modeling work done for the Lower Mystic Regional Working Group. The projections developed from the modeling work have been incorporated into the ongoing and future conditions analysis being done for the project.

V. Gupta presented a sample agenda from regional coordination meetings with the Cities of Everett, Somerville, and Cambridge, the Massachusetts Port Authority, the MBTA, and MassDOT. The agenda provided a list of projects overlapping with the Rutherford Avenue project that needed to be discussed. V. Gupta stated that these discussions are important for regional coordination, including scheduling and design overlaps.

V. Gupta presented some preliminary design phase milestones in 2025, which included the following:

- January: Early utility coordination field meeting and early environmental review checklist
- February: Conduct supplemental survey and update base plan
- March: Design justification workbook and geotechnical report
- October: Functional design report, 25 percent design plans, and bridge sketch plans
- December: 25 percent construction cost estimate and preliminary right-of-way plans

In addition, V. Gupta presented an updated project schedule, which included the following timeline:

- 2024: Concept design development and coordination with MassDOT, MBTA, Somerville, Everett, and Cambridge
- December 2025: Finalize 25 percent design
- 2026–29: 25–100 percent design work
- May 2029: Advertise construction contract
- August 2029: Bid opening
- 2029: Construction begins

V. Gupta presented information on TIP and Long-Range Transportation Plan funding, included in Table 1.

Table 1
Boston Region MPO Funding for Project 606226: Reconstruction of Rutherford Avenue

Source	FFY 2028	FFY 2029	FFYs 2030–32*	Total
			Documented in	
	Programmed in the TIP		L RTP	
City Funds	\$0	\$0	\$25,000,000	\$25,000,000
Federal Funds	\$26,800,000	\$36,000,000	\$124,527,559	\$158,207,559
Non-Federal				
Funds	\$6,700,000	\$9,000,000	\$6,131,890	\$14,551,890
Total Funds	\$33,500,000	\$45,000,000	\$155,659,449	\$197,759,449

*With an updated schedule, the first year of Regional Target funding will need to move out one year (to FFY 29). FFY = Federal Fiscal Year. LRTP = Long-Range Transportation Plan. MPO = Metropolitan Planning Organization. TIP = Transportation Improvement Program.

The total budget for the project is \$197,759,449.

V. Gupta stated that the City of Boston is hiring a full-time project manager for this project.

Discussion

Julia Wallerice, MAPC, congratulated everyone who has been working on the project, and stated that it is exciting to see the design concepts. J. Wallerice asked if there would be a cost change as a result of filling the underpasses rather than restabilizing them.

V. Gupta stated that maintaining the underpasses is very costly for the City of Boston, and there have been many instances where they have had to be closed due to safety concerns. In addition, eliminating the underpasses provides benefits for open spaces.

V. Gupta stated that the City of Boston will have a better idea of the cost of filling in the underpasses when the project reaches 25 percent design, but they are hoping to still be within the budget.

13. Members’ Items

J. Rowe stated that Boston Public Schools was tentatively awarded \$35 million from an Environmental Protection Agency Clean Heavy-Duty Vehicles grant program for 125 electric school buses and associated equipment. J. Rowe stated that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts received a grant, and the City of Boston is working

with MassDOT and MPO staff to prepare a TIP amendment based on feedback from the FHWA. J. Rowe stated that the goal is to vote to release the amendment at the January 16, 2025, MPO meeting.

S. Johnston stated that the MBTA's Bus Network Redesign was published on December 15, 2024, and that the feedback has been generally positive.

N. Rodriguez introduced herself to the MPO board as a new representative for the City of Boston. N. Rodriguez stated that she is the Director of Resilience and the Built Environment in the City of Boston's Environment, Energy, and Open Space Cabinet.

D. Mohler expressed his appreciation for this meeting's topics.

14. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by the MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the Advisory Council (L. Diggins). The motion carried.

Attendance

Members

Representatives and Alternates

At-Large City (City of Everett)	Eric Molinari
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	Jen Rowe
	Nayeli Rodriguez
	Matt Moran
Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)	Anthony Jones
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
	Brad Rawson
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)	Glenn Geiler
	Sandy Johnston
Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)	David Mohler
	John Bechard
	Derek Krevat
	Chris Klem
MassDOT Highway Division	John Romano
Massachusetts Port Authority	Sarah Lee
MBTA Advisory Board	Brian Kane
	Hanna Switekowski
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
	Julia Wallerice
MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham)	Dennis Giombetti
MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA)	Tyler Terrasi
Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Acton)	Kristen Guichard
North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly)	Darlene Wynne
North Suburban Planning Council (Town of Burlington)	Melisa Tintocalis
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Lenard Diggins
South Shore Coalition (Town of Hull)	Christopher Diiorio
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood)	Tom O'Rourke
	Steve Olanoff

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Scott Mullen	A Better City
Ben Breger	Bowman Consulting
Vineet Gupta	City of Boston
Cheryll-Ann Senior	MassDOT
Barbara Lachance	MassDOT
Ben Muller	MassDOT
Andrew Wang	MassDOT
Sarah Bradbury	MassDOT
Michelle Scott	MassDOT
Christopher Cameron	MassDOT
Stephanie Abundo	MassDOT
Derek Shooster	MassDOT
Miranda Briseño	MassDOT
Conor LeBlanc	Massachusetts Port Authority
Wes Edwards	MBTA
Josh Ostroff	MBTA
David Perry	MBTA
Margot Fleischman	MBTA
Benjamin Coulombe	MWRTA
Cam Sullivan	MWRTA
Joy Glynn	MWRTA
Kyle Whiting	Tetra Tech
Nate Ryan	Town of Acton
Meghan McNamara	Town of Lexington
Beth Parent	

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Tegin Teich, Executive Director

Abby Cutrumbes Heerema

Adriana Jacobsen

Annette Demchur

Bradley Putnam

Dave Hong

Erin Maguire

Ethan Lapointe

Jia Huang

Joe Delorto

Lauren Magee

Priyanka Chapekar

Rebecca Morgan

Rose McCarron

Sam Taylor

Sean Rourke

Sophie Fox

Stella Jordan

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