

DRAFT Boston Region MPO Communication Norms for Board and Committee Members and Officers

Introduction

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) strives to offer inclusive forums for discussions that lead to transparent decision-making. In order to do so, the Boston Region MPO recognizes that all individuals, designees, and alternates serving on the MPO Board and its Committees should maintain respectful discourse with their fellow Board members, staff to the Boston Region MPO, and members of the public.

This Communications Norms document provides a universal standard of conduct and framework for effective and respectful discourse. This document is supplemental to the Boston Region MPO Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), Boston Region MPO Operations Plan, the Bylaws of the Advisory Council, as well as any other governing documents of the MPO or its Committees. It is not a substitute for the Massachusetts State Ethics Law or the Open Meeting Law.

Norms

Members or representatives of the Boston Region MPO or its Committees shall conduct their communications related to the activities of the board and committees in the following framework:

- Listen to other Board and Committee members, MPO staff, and members of the public with respect, supporting an atmosphere of welcome open dialogue and discussion.
- Recognize that every Board member, Committee member, staff member, and member of the public represents the diversity of the region and has the right to freedom from all forms of discrimination and harassment in their association with the MPO.
- In dealing with other Board and Committee members, MPO staff, or members of the public, shall never: (1) use offensive language; (2) suggest or engage in inappropriate behavior; (3) behave in an abusive, demeaning, or discriminatory manner.
- Maintain open communication and an effective partnership with the Board's officers, committee leadership, and staff.
- During deliberations, speak clearly, state points succinctly, offering criticism in a constructive manner.

- Keep an open mind and take the views of others into full account prior to casting a vote.
- Treat all staff as professionals and respect the abilities, experience, and dignity of each individual.
- Recognize that the Executive Director is the chief executive officer of the Boston Region MPO staff with the sole responsibility for the day-to-day management of the organization, including the assignment of personnel to carry out the work of the MPO.
- Express concerns about staff performance directly to the Executive Director, outside of a public meeting.
- Refrain from giving instructions to staff as direction from any individual Board or Committee member or representative.

Reporting

Board and Committee members should report observed violations of these communications norms made by any Board or Committee member toward each other, staff, or a member of the public.

Concerns regarding potential violations may be reported to the Chair or Vice-chair of the Boston Region MPO. The Executive Director will investigate any accused violation related to staff.

The Chair and Vice-chair shall review reports of observed violations of these norms, and will proceed with the following steps:

1. Contact the Board or Committee member who has been observed violating these norms and request that they follow the established norms.
2. If there are additional reports or observed violations of these norms, or the single violation raises to a greater level of severity, then the chair and vice chair may jointly pursue one or more of the following steps:
 - a. ask for a public apology or publicly censure the individual.
 - b. contact the chief executive officer or official holder of the seat to inform them of their designee or alternate's violation, and/or, ask that a new designee or alternate be appointed.
 - c. refer the violations to MassDOT and MAPC human resources for their review and recommendations.

If the Chair or Vice-chair or their designees are observed violating the norms, the Chair of the Administration & Finance Committee shall be sought to confer on reported violations and next steps.

Certification

I certify that I have received the Communications Norms for the Boston Region MPO.

Board or Committee Member Signature

Date

Draft for Discussion