



## BOSTON REGION METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

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

**DATE: May 23, 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: Progress towards State Fiscal Year 2024 Goals**

According to the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Operations Plan,<sup>1</sup> the executive director of the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS), the staff to the MPO, is evaluated annually toward the end of the state fiscal year (SFY). The evaluation is conducted by representatives of the chair and vice-chair of the MPO and the chair of the MPO's Administration and Finance Committee. The evaluation is expected to be completed by June 15 of each year and includes the establishment of goals for the next SFY. The executive director is expected to provide quarterly updates on progress towards those goals to the committee, which may recommend updates if needed to the annual evaluation goals.

The executive director's goals established for SFY 2024 can be grouped in the following categories:

- Enhance employee experience and support retention (policies and procedures)
- Advance board priorities and enhance board experience (procedural, onboarding, information sharing, and development opportunities)
- Achieve fiscal responsibility and advance funding opportunities (surplus/deficit and fiduciary agent agreement)
- Increase CTPS's sector leadership (improved tools and partnerships)
- Implement year three of the agency's strategic plan

The following sections provide updates in each of these categories between February 5, 2023, and May 15, 2024 (spanning the third and fourth quarter of the SFY). These will be the final updates offered to the Administration and Finance (A&F) Committee before the executive director's SFY 2024 evaluation. At the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bostonmpo.org/data/pdf/about/mpo/2023-MPO-Operations-Plan.pdf>

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next A&F Committee meeting, the executive director will share goals for SFY 2025.

## 1 EMPLOYEES

Since February 5, offers have been accepted to fill the following positions: Human Resource and Operations Coordinator, Assistant Planner, Transportation Planner/Program Manager for the Congestion Management Program, and three data collectors. These successful recruitment efforts, along with two retirements, result in a full-time staff count of 54. This staffing level is below the executive director's targeted level of 61 for SFY 2024; growth by an additional 13 percent is necessary to reach the target number of employees. Even so, the current staffing level has been balanced by some revenue streams yielding lower than expected funding for staff time. As a result, the agency budget is balanced with only a slight surplus in revenue relative to expenses as of the closing of the third quarter.

Following the hiring of several new managers over the last year, leadership team members championed the delivery of information sessions focused on the areas that new managers requested. This is in addition to the completion of a comprehensive overhaul and reorganization of the agency's staff orientation and hiring processes. All supervisors have been enrolled in an "Effective Supervision Training" module scheduled in June 2024 with a second phase scheduled in August. Each training is an in-person, all-day workshop. In the first module, participants will

- understand the role and job description of a supervisor;
- identify their preferred supervisory style;
- learn how to identify what individual staff need around various aspects of their jobs and their particular challenges;
- understand the importance of and practice adapting their supervisory approach and communication style in support of staff success;
- learn and apply the Johari Window as a communication strategy to build mutually respectful and trusting relationships;
- explore the conditions that make giving feedback valuable; and
- learn how to hold one-on-one meetings that strengthen communication, trust, and staff effectiveness.

The task force that championed the roll out of Asana, a project management and collaboration platform, for use by staff successfully concluded and the agency's Project Management Working Group has been reinitiated. This working group will

focus more broadly on establishing project management best practices at the agency in support of developing and established project managers.

Following the Metropolitan Area Planning Council's (MAPC) lead, in the third quarter of the state fiscal year, CTPS surveyed staff with a list of potential new benefits to better understand those that would be most attractive to employees. The agencies will continue to work together to determine feasible improved benefits to initiate for SFYs 2025 and 2026.

## **2 BOARD**

MPO staff hosted two hybrid board meetings with in-person attendance in the Transportation Board Room at the State Transportation Building. These meetings were held in March and April during the critical part of Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) development when funding scenarios were developed and discussed by the board. Feedback was generally positive that the hybrid meetings led to increased opportunity for collaboration and relationship building among board members.

MPO staff spent extensive time with board members and project stakeholders to support their navigation of a particularly challenging TIP development season. Challenges included delays in the majority of target funded projects as well as increasing costs resulting in the need to consider options including removing a target funded project from the TIP. Through one-on-one and small group communication, as well as the facilitation of intensive TIP Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee meetings, board members were able to agree and support a TIP scenario.

In addition to the TIP Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee, the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Update Committee continues to meet regularly and successfully advance the objectives assigned to it by the board. In the last several months, the committee members have reviewed practices of peer MPOs and reached consensus on a number of MOU content updates. In addition, the committee recommended to the full board a form of Regional Transit Authority representation that met the intent of the recommendation from the Federal Recertification Review Final Report.

A new MPO board orientation program was submitted to executive leadership in May with the launch expected to be in the new SFY. In addition, staff identified a need and capacity to develop additional, more detailed modules about specific processes and requirements for documents such as the Unified Planning Work Program and TIP.

### 3 FISCAL

CTPS remains fiscally solvent, with three quarters ending with an estimated surplus. For the first time, MPO staff participated directly in presentations by the external auditor of its fiduciary, the MAPC, on May 3. The relationship between the MAPC and CTPS financial teams has continued to evolve collaboratively.

Also in May, an amendment to the FFY 2024 combined PL and 5303 contract was signed, enabling MPO staff to begin using \$140,000 of prior deobligated PL funds and Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) match towards the following initiatives:

- an accessibility review for document production,
- information technology (IT) planning and additional IT support, and
- developing a plan for updating the travel demand model network.

These funds must be used within the remaining four and one-half months of the federal fiscal year. In the meantime, MPO staff are developing a robust request to access deobligated PL funds to be included in the FFY 2025 Combined PL and 5303 contract as it is being developed, acknowledging that MassDOT may have limited capacity for providing matching funds.

Finally, CTPS has procured external legal support to engage in the procurement process for leasing an office space.

### 4 SECTOR LEADERSHIP

The new travel demand model, TDM23, has been released for public use. To date, 12 organizations have requested and received the model for their use, including other MPOs, consultants, and universities who will use the model in class curriculum. This unprecedented approach of developing, documenting, and sharing TDM23 increases the usefulness of this tool for the region while engaging the broader community to support improving the tool, leading to a more effective long-range planning process.

In addition, MPO staff have identified that the MBTA and the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation have agreed to pilot elements of the recommendations from the nationally recognized “Unlocking the Blue Hills: Addressing Equity and Access in the Blue Hills Reservation” study.

In March, April, and May, the MPO’s work was highlighted in a variety of press forums. The forums included municipal news sources, StreetsBlog, and the Boston Globe. References to the MPO ranged from brief mentions of funded

projects or studies to more thorough descriptions of work that MPO staff have completed, including quotes from MPO staff.

## **5 STRATEGIC PLAN**

The executive director works closely with the deputy executive director to ensure that leadership and resources are allocated to the activities identified in each year of the strategic plan. Other staff, including directors, take the lead over implementing or facilitating the implementation of the initiatives.

In May, the executive director and deputy executive director held final coordination and update meetings with directors in this SFY. Many of the updates in previous sections of this memo are related to strategic plan items. In addition, the agency's diversity, equity, and inclusion committee has been meeting for several months and has recommended training for the committee as well as a preliminary assessment of needs at the agency. These recommendations can be supported by amounts accounted for in the SFY 2024 budget and will serve as a basis for a more comprehensive assessment in the next FFY.

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