

MPO Meeting Minutes

Draft Memorandum for the Record

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting

July 18, 2024, Meeting

10:00 AM–11:42 AM, Zoom Video Conferencing Platform

Steve Woelfel, 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 May 16, 2024
- Endorse Federal Fiscal Years (FFYs) 2024–28 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment Nine
- Endorse FFYs 2024–28 TIP Amendment Ten
- Endorse FFYs 2024–28 TIP Adjustment Two
- Release FFYs 2024–28 TIP Amendment Eleven

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

See attendance on pages 15-17.

2. Chair’s Report—*Steve Woelfel, MassDOT*

There was none.

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

Tegin Teich, Executive Director, announced that two MPO board meetings held in October are shifting dates due to religious holidays. The meeting previously scheduled for October 3, 2024, was moved to October 10, 2024, and the meeting previously scheduled for October 17, 2024, was moved to October 24, 2024.

T. Teich spoke about updates to the Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program. T. Teich stated that on July 17, 2024, staff applied for a planning grant in the amount of \$500,000 to advance a regional bicycle and pedestrian plan for the Boston region. The plan would provide guidance tools and resources to help identify critical

network gaps and design interventions to help mitigate gaps in the bicycle and pedestrian network.

In addition, in coordination with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), the MPO partnered with three other regional planning agencies, including Old Colony Planning Council, Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District, and Cape Cod Commission, on a joint application for a grant to plan and design interregional bicycle and pedestrian connections. The total amount requested was \$2 million, and \$100,000 is allocated for MAPC and MPO staff.

T. Teich briefly overviewed the meeting agenda, which included four action items and two presentations.

T. Teich stated that the next meeting will be held on August 1, 2024, at 10:00 AM, where there will be a presentation and discussion of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Progress Update.

4. Public Comments

Brad Rawson, Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville), requested that the MPO board support TIP Amendment Ten, which included a cost increase for Project 608562: Somerville – Signal and Intersection Improvement on I-93 at Mystic Avenue and McGrath Highway (Top 200). B. Rawson stated that multiple Somerville residents have been killed crossing on state-controlled highways in crosswalks and this project is critical to the City's Vision Zero commitment.

B. Rawson also emphasized the need to continue implementing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Update Committee's work and continue sharing information about projects. B. Rawson also expressed appreciation for MPO staff and board members' work and coordination efforts.

5. Committee Chairs' Reports

Tom Bent, Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville), spoke about the work of the MOU Update Committee. T. Bent stated that the MOU Update Committee was assigned to include six work modules, and that some of them are nearing draft completion and consensus by committee members. T. Bent stated that the MOU Update Committee would like to bring a summary update to the full MPO board at the board meeting on August 1, 2024. T. Bent asked members to review the revised MOU document and share comments and suggestions by August 8, 2024, and said that comments would be addressed at the MPO board meeting on August 15, 2024. The MOU Update

Committee plans to bring a recommendation to the MPO board on August 15, 2024, to vote to release the MOU document for a 21-day public comment period.

Jen Rowe, City of Boston, shared updates about the TIP Process, Engagement and Readiness Committee. On May 16, 2024, the committee conducted a retrospective activity debriefing the TIP development process, and some of those ideas were conveyed at the June 6, 2024, board meeting. J. Rowe stated that Ethan Lapointe, MPO staff, would be recapping the FFYs 2025–29 TIP debrief later in the meeting and that the next committee meeting is tentatively scheduled for August 8, 2024.

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

Lenard Diggins, Regional Transportation Advisory Council, stated that the Advisory Council met the previous week, where the committee discussed the before-and-after study for TIP projects. L. Diggins also stated that there will not be a committee meeting in August, but that the Advisory Council will be taking a field trip on August 9, 2024.

7. Action Item: Approval of May 16, 2024, MPO Meeting Minutes Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

1. Meeting Minutes of May 16, 2024 ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

Vote

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of May 16, 2024, was made by the South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Wrentham) (Rachel Benson) and seconded by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) (Eric Bourassa). The motion carried.

8. Action Item: FFYs 2024-28 TIP Amendment Nine—*Ethan Lapointe, MPO Staff*

Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

1. FFYs 2024–28 TIP Amendment Nine Table ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

E. Lapointe presented on FFYs 2024–28 TIP Amendment Nine, which proposes cost increases to two FFY 2024 projects in the Statewide Highway and Regional Target Programs. These projects include the following:

- Wrentham—Construction of I-495/Route 1A Ramps
- Burlington—Lynnfield—Wakefield—Woburn—Bridge Preservation of 10 Bridges Carrying I-95

E. Lapointe stated that while the Wrentham I-495/Route 1A project is in the Regional Target Program, a portion of the cost increase is funded through the Statewide Highway Program.

E. Lapointe stated that there were no public comments received during the 21-day public comment period.

Vote

A motion to endorse FFYs 2024–28 TIP Amendment Nine was made by the MBTA Advisory Board (Brian Kane) and seconded by the City of Boston (J. Rowe). The motion carried.

9. Action Item: FFYs 2024-28 TIP Amendment Ten—*Ethan Lapointe, MPO Staff*

Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

1. FFYs 2024–28 TIP Amendment Ten Table ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

E. Lapointe presented on FFYs 2024–28 TIP Amendment Ten, which proposes changes to the FFY 2024 Earmark Discretionary, Statewide Highway, and Transit Programs. These changes include the following:

- Programming of a federal discretionary grant and Congressionally Directed Spending for projects in Cambridge and Lynn
- Cost increases for two roadway projects in Cohasset, Scituate, and Somerville
- Programming of State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2024 Community Transit Grant vehicle awards
- Reallocation of Regional Transit Authority (RTA) Capital funding for MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA) projects

E. Lapointe stated that staff received one comment from the I-495/MetroWest Partnership in support of cost adjustments to MWRTA projects and vehicle acquisition.

Discussion

Kenneth Miller, Federal Highway Administration, spoke about inquiries from municipalities about the earmarks in Amendment Ten, pointing out that earmarks are not like discretionary projects. K. Miller stated that earmarks are for the project, not the municipality that the project is in.

Vote

A motion to endorse FFYs 2024–28 TIP Amendment Ten was made by the MBTA Advisory Board (Brian Kane) and seconded by the City of Boston (J. Rowe). The motion carried.

10. Action Item: FFYs 2024-28 TIP Adjustment Two—*Ethan Lapointe, MPO Staff*

Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

1. FFYs 2024–28 TIP Adjustment Two Table ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

E. Lapointe presented FFYs 2024–28 TIP Adjustment Two. Adjustment Two proposes cost changes to three bicycle rack procurements within the FFY 2024 Community Connections investment program, including the following:

- Cost increase of \$8,240 for S12803: Medford Bicycle Parking (Tier 1)
- Cost decrease of \$5,625 for S12805: Canton Public Schools Bike Program
- Cost decrease of \$2,500 for S12806: Canton Public Library Bicycle Racks

Adjustment Two also includes a \$749,491 cost increase for Peabody’s Independence Greenway Extension. This change reflects the attainment of the Plans, Specifications, and Estimates stage, changes to MassDOT policy for the disposal of contaminated soils, and additional mitigation of various environmental impacts as requested by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, namely related to riprap along Proctor Brook.

Discussion

Brian Kane, MBTA Advisory Board, asked for clarification about the term “riprap” regarding the explanation of the increase in environmental costs in Adjustment Two.

John Bechard, MassDOT, stated that the term refers to a type of stone size that is laid along the brook to prevent erosion on steeper slopes. Specifically for the Peabody project, J. Bechard stated that MassDOT was concerned about erosion and the boardwalk design, so stones were installed to prevent erosion.

Vote

A motion to endorse FFYs 2024–28 TIP Adjustment Two was made by the Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) (T. Bent) and seconded by the MBTA (Josh Ostroff). The motion carried.

11. Action Item: FFYs 2024-28 TIP Amendment Eleven—*Ethan Lapointe, MPO Staff*

Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

1. FFYs 2024–28 TIP Amendment Eleven Table ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

E. Lapointe presented FFYs 2024–28 TIP Amendment Eleven, which proposes the removal of Project 607342, Milton–Intersection Improvements at Route 28 (Randolph Avenue) and Chickatawbut Road, from the FFY 2024 Statewide Highway Program to reflect a delay to FFY 2025. This delay was already accounted for in the development of the FFYs 2025–29 TIP.

The project was removed because it will not meet its FFY 2024 advertising year due to right-of-way and environmental permitting delays.

Discussion

Steven Olanoff, Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood), stated that the project is important because the intersection is one of the most dangerous in Massachusetts.

B. Kane asked, given the fact that the project has been amended twice, what the effect is of the cost increases for other projects.

J. Bechard responded that the MassDOT Highway Division is concerned about that, too, and that they are currently tracking that information. J. Bechard stated that the Highway Division will look at the weighted average bid application, which gives the cost for every project over the last several years. This allows the Highway Division to stay ahead of cost changes and work with the construction team to account for cost changes in the field.

B. Kane expressed appreciation for the work that the MassDOT Highway Division does and for the detailed answer.

S. Woelfel reiterated J. Bechard’s point, stated that this has happened with other projects in the past, and expressed appreciation for the Highway Division’s work considering changing environmental regulations.

Vote

A motion to release FFYs 2024–28 TIP Amendment Eleven was made by the MBTA (Josh Ostroff) and seconded by the City of Boston (J. Rowe). The motion carried.

12. FFYs 2025-29 TIP Debrief—*Ethan Lapointe, MPO Staff*

E. Lapointe presented the FFYs 2025–29 TIP Debrief. The objectives of the presentation included the following:

- Reflect on challenges encountered in the FFYs 2025–29 TIP development cycle
- Consider how these challenges impacted the program and the decision-making process
- Preview some improved processes for the FFYs 2026–30 cycle, including additional improvements as part of the MPO’s Operations Plan

E. Lapointe gave an overview of the milestones of the FFYs 2025–29 TIP development cycle. Phase One, which occurred between October and December 2023, included information gathering and project solicitation. This phase was unique for a variety of reasons, including the following:

- New project evaluation criteria
- New investment programs and the Project Design Pilot
- Inauguration of the TIP Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee

Phase Two occurred between January and March 2024. Development activity emerged in Phase Two, namely regarding identifying resources available to fund projects. In Phase Two, E. Lapointe stated that there was a continuation of trends from prior TIP cycles, which included the following:

- Record low project applications for core MPO programs
- Record high number of projects seeing delays from FFYs 2025 and 2026

In addition, E. Lapointe stated that stakeholders engaged in the TIP development process earlier to utilize unallocated funding from FFYs 2025 and 2026.

Phase Three included the culmination of all activities regarding identifying available resources and how projects have changed, and incorporating public engagement around the drafted TIP document. This phase occurred between March and April 2024. During Phase Three, there were weekly TIP Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee meetings to discuss difficult funding decisions.

E. Lapointe also spoke more specifically about the TIP Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee. E. Lapointe stated that the committee provided space for in-depth discussions on TIP amendments, readiness challenges, and decision-making in FFYs 2025–29. The committee will continue to play a major role in coordinating the TIP decisions that the board makes.

E. Lapointe spoke about feedback from the FFYs 2025–29 TIP process that was discussed at the May 16, 2024, TIP Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee meeting. The feedback was structured across the following five categories:

- Keep doing
- To improve
- Less of
- Start doing
- Stop doing

In the “Keep doing” category, E. Lapointe stated that responses expressed interest in continuing occasional hybrid MPO meetings and providing resources to recall and summarize prior meetings to inform decision-making, such as meeting minutes.

In the “To improve” category, responses were summarized in the following points:

- Better integrate municipal perspectives in TIP Readiness Days, and do so sooner
- Establish clearer guidelines and expectations for fill-in projects when funding is available
- Solicit these projects from more parties, such as the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and Massachusetts Port Authority, as well as the MBTA, regional transit authorities, and MassDOT

E. Lapointe consolidated the “Less of” and “Stop doing” categories. Feedback demonstrated that committee members wanted more time and a higher level of detail to make informed funding decisions on projects.

The “Start doing” category feedback represents areas where the MPO board and TIP Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee can consider improvements to the TIP development process. The feedback fell into the following categories:

- Project Seeking Funding
- Funded Projects
- Completed Projects

The feedback in this category is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
Start Doing: Committee Member Feedback

Seeking Funding	Funded Projects	Completed Projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Solicit a “bench” of projects in the fall as backup should surplus funding be available<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Work towards having municipalities take over the bench○ Engage DCR for roadway and trail projects• Build staff capacity at the MPO for design and construction skill sets• Leverage MassDOT and MBTA expertise to train municipal proponents for designing projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Require project proponents to report on the statuses of their projects and next steps in design• Establish benchmarks for project advancement• Require proponents to submit public feedback on projects for members to refer to• Pre-Readiness Days meeting with project proponents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a formal Post-Project Reporting process for TIP projects to evaluate outcomes

Based on the feedback collected on the FFYs 2025–29 TIP, MPO staff identified and investigated the recommendations to make improvements to the process, including some that are already part of the MPO’s Operations Plan. E. Lapointe stated that the points are currently being investigated by MPO staff, and there will be more information to share on improvements in the coming months. The potential improvements include the following:

- Pre-Readiness Days (tentatively mid-January)
- Reporting to the TIP Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee on project readiness throughout the year
- Earlier solicitation of transit projects to enable scoring, and scoring of some unscored projects funded in FFY 2026 of the TIP this fall

E. Lapointe stated that the TIP Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee will continue to meet before and during the next TIP cycle to discuss, develop, and implement process improvements.

Discussion

S. Woelfel asked if the TIP Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee considered the role of municipalities’ consultants, considering that they typically report on the status of a project.

E. Lapointe stated that the committee did not discuss the specific role of consultants, but that consultants played a significant role in reporting, especially on the FFY 2027 projects. E. Lapointe stated that committee members would investigate a more formal process as part of the Operations Plan to identify which stakeholders would be responsible for providing that information.

Josh Ostroff, MBTA, stated that the MBTA is figuring out how to improve processes and outcomes of its capital program. J. Ostroff stated that the MBTA has given a lot of thought to similar themes that E. Lapointe mentioned, and that the MBTA and MPO staff can work together to implement some of these improvements, such as the MBTA prioritizing the vetting of ideas for projects.

Rachel Benson, South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Wrentham), expressed appreciation for the Committee’s holistic and streamlined approach.

R. Benson suggested providing a resource for municipalities to reference when planning projects so they know what the MPO will be looking for when MPO staff score the project.

Eric Bourassa, MAPC, stated that there are some really good ideas presented and expressed appreciation for considering these issues early in the TIP cycle. E. Bourassa stated that delaying projects due to readiness has been an issue for a few years and expressed appreciation for considering solutions for this issue. E. Bourassa also stated that he agrees that consultants should be a part of the development cycle. In addition, E. Bourassa stated that there is uncertainty about the cause of delays when MassDOT reviews documents, which restricts the timeframe that municipalities must make changes in. E. Bourassa said understanding this issue better would be helpful.

S. Woelfel stated that MassDOT will take the feedback from this presentation into consideration.

B. Kane expressed support for soliciting backup projects that do not score as well and stated that he is happy to work with others on this issue. In addition, B. Kane expressed support for collaboration with DCR because they are a significant stakeholder. B. Kane also expressed appreciation for the committee, particularly J. Rowe's work as the chair and all of E. Lapointe's work.

K. Miller stated that many MPOs have ten times as many projects as they can fund, but that MPOs can be proactive in finding which projects would be the most beneficial by conducting studies that can lead to project development and identify gaps and needs of the region.

B. Kane expressed support for K. Miller's point but stated that municipalities do not have enough funding for these projects, so they look to the MPO as a funding source for projects that the municipalities should be able to fund, such as basic maintenance.

K. Miller stated that he does not disagree with B. Kane and that his statement includes studies that can attend to basic maintenance projects, such as Complete Streets.

K. Miller discussed a pilot program that would allow maintenance projects to be funded by the MPO and stated that it would provide opportunities for municipalities.

J. Rowe expressed appreciation for the valuable contributions and perspectives to the conversation and stated that this feedback will be brought to the next committee meeting.

13. Engagement Program—Community Planning Lab Update—*Stella Jordan, MPO Staff*

Stella Jordan, MPO Staff, presented the MPO Community Planning Lab Pilot Program.

S. Jordan stated that many peer agencies have deployed educational programs as a strategy to address the underrepresentation of some communities and the barriers they

face to participating in planning processes. These programs have become a very popular tool for planning agencies to increase effective engagement with the planning process. These programs offer opportunities for agency innovation, peer learning and sharing, and identifying effective actions.

S. Jordan stated that the Engagement Program researched peer agencies to understand other agencies' structures and curricula for educational programs. Conversations with peer agencies allowed the Engagement Program to develop best practices for a pilot program, including the following:

- Participatory curriculum and hands-on activities
- Real-world applicability of materials with local contexts
- Two-way learning and exchange as an explicit goal

S. Jordan stated that peer agencies' educational programs have resulted in meaningful outcomes, including the following:

- Increased public participation
- More effective participation
- More buy-in to the planning process
- Mutually beneficial for both staff/agency and participants

S. Jordan stated that educational programs facilitate more informed stakeholders and equip participants with the knowledge and tools to understand the transportation planning process. This empowers participants to effectively advocate for meaningful changes in their communities and better understand their perspectives and priorities.

S. Jordan stated that the pilot program's purpose and vision includes the following:

- Build the public's capacity to meaningfully engage in the planning process
- Engage underrepresented communities and address barriers to engagement
- Develop and test new engagement strategies

S. Jordan stated that the pilot program's goals include the following:

- Build better community relationships with a diverse constituency of advocates
- Build capacity and empower new stakeholders to engage with MPO work
- Improve strategic planning and effectiveness evaluation efforts within the Public Engagement Program
- Develop a broader program in future years with feedback from the pilot cohort and staff

- Serve as a pipeline for new Advisory Council members

The Engagement Program plans to launch the pilot program in September 2024, which will include a one-to-two-day intensive program. The program pilot will include a cohort of five members representing community-based organizations.

S. Jordan stated that while the program's scope will not have the capacity to implement all the great ideas that MPO staff found through research, those ideas will be archived and explored as the program expands.

Discussion

J. Ostroff asked if MPO staff are looking for individuals to participate in the program, such as mentors or speakers, and if so, J. Ostroff expressed interest in participating.

S. Jordan expressed appreciation for J. Ostroff's interest and stated that since the pilot is very small scale at this point, MPO staff have not built in time for outside facilitators, but that is something that MPO staff would like to explore in the future iterations of the program.

E. Bourassa stated that he has found success in engaging with regional communities by having conversations regarding the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) because it has a regional focus, whereas the TIP is more focused on specific municipalities where projects are taking place.

Erin Chute, Town of Brookline, stated that the program could be valuable for engaging municipalities to understand how they can utilize the MPO to make strategic enhancements in their communities. E. Chute stated that municipalities can be understaffed, which makes it difficult for municipalities to navigate the transportation planning process, and that this program would make the process more accessible to municipalities.

S. Jordan expressed appreciation for E. Chute's perspective and stated that MPO staff hope to include municipalities as the program expands.

J. Rowe stated that the Boston Region's transportation planning system is extra complex and expressed interest in the benefits of this program. J. Rowe stated that another effective strategy with public engagement is incorporating the MPO's history, including why MPOs exist in the context of highway protesting.

L. Diggins expressed enthusiasm for participating in the program and expressed support for willingness to help anyone understand the transportation planning process.

L. Diggins also emphasized that the program is committed to helping individuals understand the process in the long term because it is such a complex process, and it will take a long time for individuals to fully understand the process.

B. Kane suggested having one name for the organization, rather than the Boston Region MPO and the Central Transportation Planning Staff, to mitigate confusion.

14. Members' Items

There were none.

15. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by the MBTA Advisory Board (B. Kane) and seconded by the South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Wrentham) (R. Benson). 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
City of Boston (Boston Planning & Development Agency)	Jim Fitzgerald
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	Jen Rowe
Federal Highway Administration	Kenneth Miller
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Brad Rawson
	Tom Bent
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)	Josh Ostroff
Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)	Stephen Woelfel
	Derek Krevat
Massachusetts Port Authority	Sarah Lee
MassDOT Highway Division	John Bechard
	John Romano
MBTA Advisory Board	Brian Kane
	Hanna Switekowski
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Acton)	Kristen Guichard
North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly)	Erin Schaeffer
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Lenard Diggins
South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Wrentham)	Rachel Benson
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood)	Steven Olanoff

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Eddie Marques	Cape Ann Transportation Authority (CATA)
Felicia Webb	CATA
Matthew Moran	City of Boston
Cheryll-Ann Senior	MassDOT
Chris Klem	MassDOT
Raissah Kouame	MassDOT
Barbara Lachance	MassDOT
Derek Shooster	MassDOT
Tyler Terrasi	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA)
Jim Nee	MWRTA
Cam Sullivan	MWRTA
TJ Torres	Town of Canton
Sheila Page	Town of Lexington
Anaeli Lopez	Town of Marblehead
Chris Reilly	Town of Saugus
Paul Cobuzzi	
Sara Han	
Marc Older	
Patricia McDermott	

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Tegin Teich, Executive Director

Abby Cutrumbes

Adriana Jacobsen

Ali Kleyman

Annette Demchur

Dave Hong

Erin Maguire

Ethan Lapointe

Gina Perille

Hiral Gandhi

Jia Huang

Judy Day

Lauren Magee

Meghan O'Connor

Rebecca Morgan

Sam Taylor

Sarah Philbrick

Sean Rourke

Srilekha Murthy

Stella Jordan

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Boston Region MPO Title VI Specialist

10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150

Boston, MA 02116

Phone: 857.702.3700

Email: civilrights@ctps.org

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