

WORK PROGRAM

UNDERSTANDING STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS OF ROADWAY-PRICING STRATEGIES AND CONCEPTUALIZING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

JANUARY 8, 2026

Proposed Motion

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) votes to approve this work program.

Project Identification

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Classification

Boston Region MPO Planning Studies and Technical Analyses

Project Number 26003

Client

Boston Region MPO

Project Supervisors

Principal: Elena Ion

Manager: Abigail Cutrumbes Heerema

Funding Source

MPO Planning Contract TBD and MPO §5303 Contract TBD

Schedule and Budget

Schedule: 8 months

Budget: \$49,417

Schedule and budget details are shown in Exhibits 1 and 2, respectively.

Relationship to MPO Goals

The Boston Region MPO elected to fund this study with its federally allocated metropolitan planning funds during federal fiscal year (FFY) 2026. The work completed through this study will address the following goal areas established in the MPO's Long-Range Transportation Plan: capacity management and mobility, clean air and clean communities, transportation equity, and economic vitality.

Background

In FFY 2023 and FFY 2025, the Boston Region MPO undertook studies focused on identifying lessons learned from roadway-pricing efforts in the U.S. and abroad, as well as assessing the tools and data most useful in exploring the impacts of potential strategies in the Boston region. In FFY 2023, the MPO focused on examples of different types of roadway pricing, ranging from demand-based parking pricing in Washington, D.C. to cordon-style congestion pricing in New York City. The study focused on how the implementation of these strategies unfolded and the subsequent effects on congestion and revenue. In FFY 2025, the MPO built on these findings by investigating the methodology and tools best suited to study and analyze a potential roadway-pricing strategy in the Boston region.

This FFY 2026 study will focus on strategies used to engage stakeholders and foster support for roadway pricing and how these strategies could apply to the Boston region. It will draw on insights from agencies that have implemented roadway pricing or have initiated implementation efforts, specifically focusing on effective stakeholder analysis, engagement, and messaging strategies.

Agencies desiring to implement roadway-pricing strategies must consider both the differential impacts on various stakeholder groups and how perceptions of these impacts can affect implementation. By understanding these potential impacts and perceptions, implementing agencies can tailor strategies to mitigate specific concerns, build public trust, and ensure effective messaging.

Drawing on peer agency interviews and a literature review, this study will develop a framework for conducting roadway-pricing stakeholder analyses in the Boston region. This framework will detail how different groups or organizations would be affected by a roadway-pricing strategy, the influence they would have on the implementation of the strategy, and how an implementing organization might identify and engage with stakeholders regarding potential roadway-pricing strategies. This work will be accomplished through two primary efforts: analyzing the findings from interviews with agencies that have successfully implemented or initiated implementation of roadway pricing, focusing on their stakeholder engagement and messaging strategies, and developing a stakeholder analysis and engagement toolkit for a conceptual roadway-pricing strategy in the Boston region.

Objectives

The study's objectives are to understand

1. how implementing agencies have conducted stakeholder outreach and utilized engagement and messaging to both modify their strategies by incorporating feedback and increasing public understanding,

2. how various stakeholders may be affected by the implementation of roadway-pricing strategies, including the respective challenges and benefits, and
3. how different stakeholders could influence the implementation process.

Work Description

Task 1 Assess Stakeholder Attitudes and Engagement and Messaging Strategies

Staff will research stakeholder attitudes towards, and engagement and messaging strategies regarding, roadway pricing. To accomplish this, staff will review existing sources (such as surveys, webinars, and other publicly available materials) and interview agencies that have successfully implemented roadway pricing or initiated implementation efforts. Staff will then conduct a thematic analysis of the data to determine the main factors that influence implementation. The results will inform the conceptual stakeholder analysis in Task 2.

Subtask 1.1 Review Existing Surveys and Information

MPO staff will examine existing surveys and outreach materials to determine how specific messaging approaches affect support for roadway pricing. Staff will analyze Boston region-specific sources, including public opinion surveys from MassINC, the 2025 Transportation Finance Task Force report, and minutes from the Boston City Council's July 2024 special hearing on congestion pricing. Key sources from outside the Boston region will include news media, official reports, and public outreach materials used by agencies (such as New York City's Metropolitan Transportation Authority) in roadway-pricing implementations, such as webinars or minutes from public meetings. Staff will also research materials that document how support for roadway-pricing strategies changes throughout and after implementation. This review will establish an initial understanding of messaging strategies.

Subtask 1.2 Identify and Select Candidate Agencies

Staff will identify the most appropriate agencies and contacts for interviews, and select up to five agencies based on the following criteria:

- The agency must have successfully implemented or initiated the implementation of roadway pricing.
- The agency must have conducted significant stakeholder outreach.
- The agency must be willing and able to share its engagement and messaging strategies publicly.

Subtask 1.3 Develop Interview Guide and Conduct Interviews

Staff will create a semi-structured interview guide that balances predetermined questions with the flexibility to explore emerging topics. Staff will then conduct the interviews with the agencies selected in Subtask 1.2, focusing on

- how the agency prioritized stakeholders based on attitudes and levels of influence,
- how the agency chose specific engagement methods and messaging strategies, and
- whether those engagement methods and messaging strategies strengthened implementation.

Subtask 1.4 Thematic Analysis of Interview Data and Outreach Materials

Staff will conduct a thematic analysis of the data collected in Subtasks 1.1 and 1.3. This analysis will examine interview data and agency outreach materials to identify recurring concerns about potential adverse impacts and benefits of roadway pricing. The analysis will seek to identify messaging approaches that address stakeholder concerns, improve public understanding, and build communication channels between the public and implementing agencies.

Products of Task 1

1. A literature review and analysis of previous public survey results regarding roadway pricing and publicly available materials regarding implementing agencies' stakeholder outreach and messaging efforts
2. Criteria for interview selection and interview guides
3. Key takeaways and a thematic analysis from the interviews on public concerns and perceptions of roadway pricing
4. Summary of the most effective outreach and messaging strategies for agencies that are considering roadway pricing

Task 2 Develop a Toolkit for Conducting a Stakeholder Analysis and Engagement Strategy

Building on the findings from Task 1, staff will design a toolkit with a standardized framework for stakeholder analysis and engagement. The toolkit will use a comprehensive, geographically oriented, complex roadway-pricing strategy, such as cordon congestion pricing, as an illustrative scenario to show that it can be useful for some of the most challenging implementations. This task focuses on designing the methodology for identifying and categorizing stakeholders and stakeholder groups, assessing their potential needs and concerns, and mapping their potential influence.

The resulting framework will be a neutral, replicable template that allows agencies to systematically evaluate potential impacts, preempt concerns, and identify opportunities for coordination with supportive stakeholders. Although focused on a cordon-style strategy, the principles of the framework can be modified to apply to other types of roadway pricing. The development of the stakeholder analysis and engagement framework will be conducted through the following subtasks:

Subtask 2.1 Define Stakeholder Typologies

Staff will develop a comprehensive classification system to categorize potential stakeholders for a conceptual cordon-style pricing program. The list will draw on demographic analysis from the FFY 2025 roadway-pricing study and include broad stakeholder typologies representing anyone who could influence or be affected by the program, such as the following:

- Roadway users, to include commuters using all modes (transit, private vehicle, and active transportation), delivery drivers, and taxi and rideshare drivers
- Community members, to include residents, community-based organizations, advocacy groups (environmental, transit, etc.)
- Economic interests, to include businesses and retail establishments within and outside the cordon, real estate developers, transportation and logistics companies, parking garage operators, and the tourism industry
- Institutions: AAA, labor unions, universities and colleges, property owners, and public agencies that would be involved in the creation and implementation of the program

Subtask 2.2 Assess Interests and Influence

Staff will use the findings from Task 1 and other sources, such as reports or news media from New York, Stockholm, and other cities that have implemented or initiated the implementation of roadway pricing, to define metrics and criteria to assess stakeholder positions within the framework. This includes developing scales for attitude (support/neutral/oppose), degree of influence (high/medium/low), and level of interest (high/medium/low). Applicable demographic analysis from the FFY 2025 roadway pricing study will be incorporated.

Through conducting the FFY 2023 roadway-pricing study, the MPO learned that concerns about equity are prevalent in any conversation about roadway pricing. To ensure equity remains a focus, staff will also integrate an assessment of equity implications in the framework. This will provide future users with a method to analyze the types of impacts each stakeholder category might experience or

be concerned about, including changes in travel times, transportation costs, air quality, or access to the transportation network; the quality of the impact (positive/negative/mixed); and the level of vulnerability (higher-income vs. lower-income groups, or salary workers vs. shift workers). This will ensure equity considerations are identified systematically.

Subtask 2.3 Develop Analytical Matrices and Evaluation Tools

Staff will create the analytical tools required to map stakeholder relationships and prioritize engagement efforts. This includes designing templates for a Power/Interest Grid to visualize which groups require close management versus those who simply need to be kept informed, a prioritization matrix linking common stakeholder concerns with likely levels of support and influence, and a guide for identifying potential collaborations and risks of opposition.

To demonstrate the utility of these tools, staff will use the findings from Task 1 and Subtask 2.2 to map common positions, influence levels, key relationships, alliances, or potential conflicts between the different generalized stakeholder categories (e.g., environmental advocacy groups, suburban commuters, or freight associations) to populate the matrices. Staff will create a comprehensive document detailing the methodology, findings, and analysis, including the list of identified and categorized stakeholders and how they can affect and are affected by the program.

Subtask 2.4 Design Strategic Engagement Framework

Staff will create an engagement framework that describes best practices for reaching distinct stakeholder groups. This framework will prioritize methodologies and messaging for engaging the populations who will experience the greatest impacts of a roadway-pricing strategy and the populations that will have the greatest influence on roadway-pricing implementation. The engagement framework will detail the most effective methods and messaging to engage with each stakeholder group and can be utilized by future implementing agencies as a framework to produce their own specific engagement plans.

Products of Task 2

1. A roadway pricing stakeholder analysis and engagement toolkit, including the following:
 - a. List of identified stakeholders and categories
 - b. Populated Power/Interest matrix using generalized stakeholder categories to illustrate common positions and influence levels
 - c. Template for linking stakeholder concerns with their level of influence and support

- d. Methodology for identifying potential opportunities for collaboration or risks of opposition
- e. Engagement framework that identifies effective messaging strategies, including those identified in Task 1
- f. Guide detailing how to apply these tools to future roadway-pricing initiatives

Exhibit 1**ESTIMATED SCHEDULE****Understanding Stakeholder Perceptions of Roadway-Pricing Strategies and Conceptualizing Effective Communication Strategies**

Task	Month								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Assessment of Attitudes and Strategies									
2. Develop a Toolkit For Stakeholder Analysis and Engagement								A	B

Products/Milestones

A: Study and toolkit draft

B: Final study and toolkit

Exhibit 2**ESTIMATED COST****Understanding Stakeholder Perceptions of Roadway-Pricing Strategies and Conceptualizing Effective Communication Strategies**

Direct Salary and Overhead	\$49,417
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Task	Person-Weeks by Pay Grade				Direct Salary	Overhead (122.59%)	Total Cost
	G-9	G-7	G-5	Total			
1. Assessment of Attitudes and Strategies	0.2	1.0	6.2	7.5	\$11,740	\$14,392	\$26,132
2. Develop a Toolkit For Stakeholder Analysis and Engagement	0.2	1.2	5.0	6.5	\$10,461	\$12,824	\$23,285
Total	0.5	2.2	11.2	14.0	\$22,201	\$27,216	\$49,417

Other Direct Costs	\$0
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Travel	\$0
General Office Equipment	\$0

TOTAL COST	\$49,417
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Funding

MPO Planning Contract TBD

MPO §5303 Planning Contract TBD

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Boston, MA 02116

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