



BOSTON REGION METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Jamey Tesler, MassDOT Secretary and CEO and MPO Chair
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TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 12, 2022
TO: Federal Team for the Boston Region MPO 2022 Certification Review
FROM: Boston Region MPO Staff
RE: Responses to Advance Questions

This document has been prepared by Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) staff in response to advance questions from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) related to the MPO's 2020 Certification Review, which is scheduled for September 28 and 29, 2022. The federal team's questions and the MPO's responses are organized in the order in which the questions were submitted. Other requested materials pertaining to the MPO's September 2022 certification review are available at <http://bostonmpo.org/2022-materials>.

1 MPO STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE

- 1. Please provide a brief overview of the status of the MPO's operations plan including parties that are currently involved and the anticipated process for development and adoption.***

Immediately following the 2018 recommendation to develop an operations plan, Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) to the MPO entered a state of transition after the departure of the executive director and deputy executive director. During this time the MPO focused on the recruitment process for a new executive director, who was hired in October 2019. The MPO chair, vice-chair/CTPS Fiduciary Agent, and the new executive director of the staff to the MPO agreed to engage in a strategic planning effort for CTPS in advance of detailing the MPO's operations plan. A search for a strategic planning consultant was initiated in January 2020. Due to a variety of factors, including the start of fully remote work in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the strategic planning process did not launch until July of 2020 and was completed in April 2021.

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The development of an MPO operations plan was considered and recommended as part of the strategic planning process, and in the summer of 2021, the chair, vice-chair, and executive director of staff to the MPO began developing a draft framework for what could be included in the operations plan. After MPO leadership and staff reached consensus on an initial draft framework, a [memo proposing options for the process for developing the operations plan and list of proposed topics](#) (based on the MOU requirements and federal certification recommendations) was shared with the full MPO board in May of 2022.

There was consensus that the work to develop the MPO operations plan should be under the purview of the MPO's Administration and Finance Committee, chaired by the representative for the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Advisory Board, Brian Kane. Additional members of the committee include representatives from the Regional Transportation Advisory Council, MetroWest Regional Collaborative subregion, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) Office of Transportation Planning (OTP), and Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). All board members and members of the public are invited to participate in the committee discussions. The initial meeting took place on May 5, 2022. As of August 11, 2022, the committee has discussed and agreed upon a process for undertaking the recommended aspects of the operations plan, written up one section (elections procedure), and begun discussing and writing the second section (roles and responsibilities of officers of the board). The committee will continue to meet until all topics outlined in the memo and any others that may arise have been addressed and incorporated into the operations plan.

2. *Please provide a brief summary of current status of the transit working group and the planned future of this group.*

As approved by the MPO after a [review of the yearlong pilot on February 3, 2022](#), the Transit Working Group is now a permanent component of the MPO's work, and is identified as such in both the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2022 and (draft) FFY 2023 Unified Planning Work Programs (UPWP). The Transit Working Group currently holds public meetings quarterly, supplemented by one- or two-hour-long virtual informal sessions per month, known as coffee chats. Transit Working Group meetings are typically 90 minutes to two hours long and cover a variety of topics in the following categories:

- Updates on MPO activities
- Guest speakers on relevant transit topics

- Opportunities for peer exchange

Attendance at Transit Working Group meetings varies within the 30 to 70 attendee range. Attendees come from a variety of backgrounds, including MBTA and other Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) staff; staff from other mobility providers (transit management associations [TMA], municipal operators, and the human services transportation sector); advocates; and interested riders.

Coffee chats are informal, with no written agenda. Often the coffee chat will involve a guest speaker with a 10- to 15-minute presentation followed by discussion, but sometimes they are structured around a themed conversation with prompts provided by MPO staff. Attendance is capped at 30 to facilitate informal conversation, with most coffee chats seeing between 10 and 20 attendees. We prioritize staff from mobility providers for these chats, and the conversations are primarily for their benefit.

Agendas, materials, and recordings for all Transit Working Group meetings and most coffee chats (we offer the option of confidentiality for certain conversations) and one-off events such as the January 2022 microtransit forum are available on the [Transit Working Group web page](#). We also provide written summaries as able, although we are still catching up on a backlog as of July 2022.

We currently plan for the Transit Working Group to continue in its present form. Feedback from participants has been largely enthusiastic, and it is clear that the Transit Working Group has opened up spaces and opportunities for coordination and collaboration that did not previously exist in the Boston region. There have been some questions from participants about the potential for the Transit Working Group to help research, facilitate discussion on, and provide technical assistance for solving specific transit-related issues around the Boston region, which we could address with an increase in staff capacity. At present, we plan for the Transit Working Group to remain predominantly staff-led and staff-facilitated, as participants have expressed little to no interest in creating a participant governance structure in surveys and informal conversations.

2 TMA REGION COORDINATION

3. ***Please provide an update on plans to hold coordination meetings between the MPOs serving the northern and southern portions, respectively, of the Boston UZA.***

The MPO plans to hold meetings with the other MPOs that are part of the northern and southern urbanized area (UZA) area in September and October 2022. Staff will be reaching out to transportation managers of each MPO in the respective areas and will coordinate agendas for items to discuss, which may include data sharing, coordination on Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) development (including project readiness and increased costs issues), SS4A grant applications and information sharing, and regional modeling efforts. In addition to these targeted Boston UZA meetings, staff participate in the monthly Transportation Managers Group (TMG) meetings through the Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA), which coordinates with all MPOs and their staff statewide on the first Tuesday of the month. Staff also participate in various subgroups of TMG, including the Data Users Group and the PL subcommittee.

4. *The 2021 FHWA/FTA Planning Emphasis Areas include an item on data sharing, data needs and analytics. As the largest MPO region in the state and with staff serving as a major provider of data services in MA, what data sharing principles guide the MPO's collection, usage, and sharing of data for the transportation planning process with parties both within the MPA and the broader TMA?*

The MPO strives to conduct rigorous, transparent transportation analysis, using trustworthy datasets and modern analytic platforms. The MPO shares data it houses via a self-serve data portal or via ad hoc data requests, which are tracked to ensure that we are providing data within reasonable response times, internally coordinating on analysis methods and providing consistent results, and prioritizing what we publish on our data portal. The MPO also maintains a series of memoranda of understanding with our neighboring urbanized areas. These memoranda document our shared commitments to share data, processes, and knowledge. As part of our broader coordination efforts, several MPO staff members participate in the TMG Data Users Group, which addresses shared data needs and concerns among MPOs in Massachusetts.

For our data analysis work, we have furthered the use of code-based approaches (for example, using Python and R), tracking work in GitHub, a version control system. Moving more analyses to code-based approaches means that we do not have to rely on our reputation for high-quality analysis—we can share the inputs, process, and outputs. The work we have

been doing over the last several years has prepared us to share full analysis by default if we determine this to be the preferred strategy.

The MPO has demonstrated its commitment to robust data practices in three core ways:

1. Creating a new data analysis focused group within the MPO staff. The Data Analysis and Applications group provides the MPO with a core set of data analysts who can work on many projects throughout the agency. Establishing a team of closely coordinated data analysts will enable the MPO to consistently maintain its standards and analysis practices across the MPO's work products.
2. Hiring the MPO's first Data Strategist. The Data Strategist is responsible for elevating the MPO's role as a resource for data and analytics in the region, overseeing the development of policies and mechanisms for data usage, sharing, and communication both internally and externally, and developing and supporting strategies to maintain, update, and coordinate CTPS-managed databases, data analysis tools, dashboards, and web applications.
3. Committing to fund a new Data Program in the latest UPWP. The purpose of this ongoing program is to support the data needs of the MPO and its stakeholders. While parts of this work were already being performed across the agency, the program eliminates redundancies and centralizes the foundational and future looking data-related work. There are four main areas of focus for this program: data planning, data management, data research, and data partnerships.

We expect three of the outputs from the first year of this new data program to be:

1. A modernized open data portal. While we have a data portal available, modern open data platforms enable new ways of describing, visualizing, and sharing our public data. The data portal will be accompanied by standards for datasets published by the MPO. We intend to review our datasets to identify those that are appropriate to share on the portal.
2. A modern documentation platform. With a modern platform, the MPO has the opportunity to centralize our body of work into a searchable, durable repository of information and processes. This platform will give us the ability to share more information about our datasets and how they were processed with stakeholders and the public.

3. A data roadmap. The data roadmap will lay out the steps required to reach our vision about how the MPO obtains, develops, manages, and shares data. It will include a data inventory, a data needs assessment, and our approach towards meeting our data vision and strategy.

3 UPWP

5. *Please describe the role of the UPWP Committee, its members, how frequently the Committee meets. Is there a UPWP Committee bylaw or agreement in place?*

The role of the UPWP committee is to provide input and guidance throughout the UPWP development process, beginning with the initial process of identifying study ideas, including engaging stakeholders and members of the public. Members of the committee also oversee the process of selecting studies for the Universe of Proposed Studies, provide extensive input on the scopes of selected studies, and guide the overall development of the document. The committee reports to the full MPO board on its work and recommends that the MPO release the UPWP document for public comment and, following the public comment period, that the MPO endorse it prior to the MPO votes; the same process applies to amendments. The role of the committee is further described in Chapter 2 of the [UPWP document](#).

The UPWP Committee meets about 10 times a year. Each UPWP mentions the number of times the Committee met during the development process.

The UPWP Committee has no bylaws. The membership list is maintained by MPO staff, but the Chair allows other MPO members who attend meetings to vote. Definition of the parameters for the MPO's standing and ad hoc committees has been proposed as an area for improvement in the Operations Plan.

6. *Please show us where the UPWP includes information for each task on funding amounts for the federal share and matching share and whether the matching is state or local funds.*

Information on funding amounts for the federal share and matching share can be found in the Executive Summary and at the beginning of Chapter 8. Information on the total funding amounts for each task can be found

throughout the document and in Chapter 8. Matching funds are included in the total for each task, as all matching funds are provided by MassDOT.

4 TIP

7. *Please describe how the MPO ensures the TIP is implemented consistent with the MTP.*

The MPO ensures that the TIP is implemented consistent with the LRTP as LRTP funding is channeled through [LRTP investment programs](#), which are programming conduits used in the TIP. The LRTP establishes funding goals for each investment program, reflecting the share of funds that the MPO intends to spend for each program during a given five-year period over the life of the plan. While all other investment programs have funding goals, the Major Infrastructure program is capped at 30 percent of MPO discretionary funding in a five-year period. During the TIP development process, staff provides the MPO with information comparing TIP allocations of MPO discretionary funding to the LRTP funding goals for each program (see [page 3 in this scenario document](#)) and includes a final comparison in the TIP document (see [Figure ES-2 in the FFYs 2023–27 TIP](#)).

In addition, the TIP criteria used to evaluate projects for the TIP reflect the LRTP goals. Staff also bring additional relevant information about the evaluated projects to the board for consideration when selecting projects for inclusion in the TIP. This supplementary information may include details about how projects address location-specific needs identified in the MPO's LRTP Needs Assessment.

8. *We understand the TIP evaluation criteria was recently revised to be more in alignment with the goals in the MTP, Destination 2040. What were the challenges of going through the TIP criteria revision process?*

The MPO's [2019–20 update of its TIP project selection criteria](#) involved balancing a variety of needs, ensuring transparency, and facilitating the involvement of a wide range of regional stakeholders. When initiating the process, MPO members elected to do a “complete reimagining” of its existing criteria, which involved developing criteria for each of the MPO's investment programs, making extensive updates, and adjusting criteria weighting. This approach involved a number of policy, technical, administrative, and engagement challenges, including the following:

- Ensuring meaningful public engagement and input into the criteria development process, which can be technically complex
- Structuring criteria in ways that would be intuitive while capturing the range of factors that are of interest to the MPO (and their relative importance)
- Identifying criteria for which data would be readily available and consistent
- Changing the MPO's approach for including equity criteria so that it would account for who is likely to be affected by a project and the project's impacts (benefits and burdens)
- Managing changes to the criteria while ensuring a level of process continuity that would be workable for MPO members and project proponents
- Integrating activities that support the criteria update into an already full MPO calendar
- Building MPO member and project stakeholder confidence in the results of a new scoring process

MPO staff addressed technical challenges through peer research (including through conferences), exploring new data resources, and by seeking technical assistance from Transportation for America and the State Smart Transportation Initiative. These organizations worked with MPO staff to share ideas and test concepts related to destination access and cost-effectiveness, and Beth Osborne, director of Transportation for America, presented at an MPO meeting about these concepts. With respect to transportation equity criteria, the MPO ultimately developed a scoring process that integrated equity into the other criteria (such as those pertaining to safety or clean air), so that the equity score reflects each project's benefits and burdens. For example, a project receives a higher score if (1) there is a high proportion of equity populations living in the project area, and (2) it improves air quality.

To effectively communicate these technical changes, staff created public engagement materials and activities that used plain language and focused on understanding peoples' transportation priorities, rather than on the technical analyses that are part of the scoring process. MPO staff summarized the criteria changes in general terms in [A Guidebook to Creating the TIP Criteria](#). To ensure robust feedback, the MPO set aside time over the course of multiple meetings, and supplemented these discussions with focus groups. Staff visited the meetings of community and

advocacy organizations to discuss the criteria and released public surveys towards the beginning of the process and before the MPO adopted a final set of criteria. Prior to adoption, MPO staff test-scored a sample of projects against many of the new criteria, and worked to clearly communicate timelines about when projects would be evaluated against the new criteria.

The MPO is working through several remaining challenges as it continues to implement these new criteria. Staff will need to continue to develop criteria for its Transit Modernization program, which is still in its early stages. MPO staff could support the MPO in better connecting the criteria for its Community Connections (CC) program, which were developed as part of a parallel process, with the criteria established for its other investment programs. Staff will keep working on ways to clearly communicate the equity component of the project scoring process, given its technical complexity, and will continue to explore manageable ways to reflect cost-effectiveness considerations in its project decision-making process. Staff will be considering these outstanding challenges both in the near term and as it looks ahead to future criteria updates that will follow the adoption of Destination 2050, the MPO's next LRTP.

9. *We understand there have been some project readiness issues, particularly in FY22. Please describe the process for how the MPO decides which projects to move forward with. Has the MPO determined a process for how to handle project readiness issues in the future, should they arise again?*

Project readiness and cost increases have been an issue for the MPO, and in FFY 2022 the MPO established an ad hoc committee, facilitated by the vice-chair, to discuss the challenges associated with these issues. All board members were invited to participate.

The committee discussed a number of aspects of the causes and impacts, and identified potential strategies to address project readiness and cost increase issues. The committee considered some of the following strategies:

- Setting a design status threshold to program a project in the TIP
- Assigning design thresholds to each year of the TIP
- Funding design efforts by municipal proponents

- Providing technical assistance to municipal proponents to support advancing projects
- Increasing the pipeline of projects for the Boston region TIP so that board members had more choices between ready projects
- Instituting regular updates from MassDOT staff to the MPO board on project readiness

Based on staff analysis, the ad hoc committee members focused on when the greatest cost increases occur in project development, which has historically been between the Project Review Committee (PRC) submission and 25 percent design approval. The ad hoc committee recommended to the board that the MPO set a policy to only program projects that have reached 25 percent design submittal in the TIP. Because MassDOT has also implemented a policy of holding a pre-25 percent design submittal scoping meeting, the MPO hopes this practice will both help ensure that the projects being programmed have less variation in cost and that readiness assumptions will be more reliable. In that recommendation, the board also discussed and emphasized that they could, at their discretion, program projects in the TIP before that stage, particularly since this has not been past practice and project proponents would need time to adjust to this new policy. In addition, the board supported staff implementing preliminary scoring of PRC-approved projects, which would be refined at 25 percent design submittal when being considered for programming in the TIP.

In addition, the ad hoc committee recommended and the board established an expectation that when a project in the TIP changed in cost by \$2.5 million (for projects originally estimated to cost more than \$10 million) or 25 percent (for projects that cost less than \$10 million), the proponent would be invited and expected to attend an MPO meeting to explain the context for the cost change.

Another recommendation and request for staff is to engage in more extensive coordination with project proponents throughout the life of the project. To address this request, CTPS will be seeking to supplement the capacity of the TIP manager with a secondary staff person committed to the TIP to enable that greater coordination.

5 FINANCIAL PLANNING

10. If an applicant to the Community Connections program applies multiple years of funding, what process does the

MPO follow to award future funding? Are applicants made aware that future Federal funding is contingent on continued demonstration of emissions reductions?

If an applicant requests multiple years of funding, the MPO will tentatively award up to three years of funding, with the requirement that the MPO's share of funding decrease each year and that the applicant re-verify that there is an air quality benefit under Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) before receiving each successive year of funding. The expectation is that funding will be 100 percent local in Year Four. Applicants are made aware of the requirement for demonstration of emissions reductions in writing in the application; in conversation with MPO staff during project development; at MPO meetings where the CC program is discussed; and at other relevant opportunities.

11. Has the MPO considered expanding the Community Connections program beyond the existing categories of eligibility?

The MPO has extensively considered other categories of projects for CC eligibility. Previous proposals include bus shelters, e-ink signs for MBTA bus stops, and wayfinding signage. At this time, while we are continuing to pursue the expansion of the CC program beyond the existing categories, we are constrained by the primary limiting factor of the capacity required to administer small grants such as these, relative to larger grants. Another, though secondary, limiting factor is the need to procure Buy America-compliant materials for capital projects.

CTPS does not currently have the capacity or skill sets to support in-house grant management capability, although developing such a capacity has been discussed internally, mostly as a consequence of this program. Typically, the MassDOT Highway Division administers TIP projects, but they have not committed to administering the smaller grants as part of the CC program. We understand their concern in administering smaller CC grants to be related to the time and cost associated with administering these projects relative to the size of the grants and potential benefits.

The current CC grants are being administered by several agencies: MAPC, MassDOT OTP, and transit authorities. MAPC has the capability to administer certain types of CC grants that are managed through their collective purchasing agreements. MassDOT OTP has administered some CC grants but also has concerns about the level of staff time commitment

required relative to the size and impact of the grant. Some CC grants are flexed to FTA, requiring the consent and support of the MBTA or an RTA to administer the grant. Those agencies, particularly the MBTA, may have similar concerns over capacity relative to their efforts to administer significantly larger grants

6 PUBLIC OUTREACH

12. After finalizing the Public Engagement Plan, and hiring new staff in this area, how has your public engagement program changed/advanced?

The new Communications and Engagement team was established in January 2022 with the hiring of a Manager of Communications and Engagement and a Public Engagement Coordinator. In May 2022, a Communications Coordinator was hired. Since then, the group has been effectively collaborating with staff across the agency to provide opportunities for engagement, including open houses, surveys, meetings, and public comment periods. Increased capacity has allowed for more advanced strategic engagement planning and a better articulated vision for public engagement. This vision includes building upon the prior strategy of project-focused outreach to develop a comprehensive approach to building and maintaining long-term relationships with stakeholders.

More specifically, having more staff time dedicated to engagement has allowed for renewed collaboration between engagement staff and the Transportation Equity Program Manager, more frequent meetings with advocacy and community groups, and more advanced public engagement strategic planning. Engagement staff have also been working with the graphics and editorial staff to discuss ways to improve public-facing products, with the goal of making the MPO's work more accessible and understandable.

13. What have you discovered since establishing new qualitative and quantitative measures? How has this analysis of effectiveness impacted your outreach strategies, if at all?

Since formalizing new qualitative and quantitative measures in the Public Engagement Plan (endorsed in October 2021), staff have continued to monitor engagement in MPO events, processes, and studies through the development of comment and event tracking tools and a consolidated

stakeholder database. The reliance on remote meetings and events as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic has made tracking attendees easier, which has allowed for more robust follow-up, as well as more targeted engagement.

Tracking engagement through public comments and participation in MPO events has also allowed us to identify stakeholders who frequently engage with our work. Tracking through public comments and participation in MPO events has also given us opportunities to strengthen and build relationships with these individuals and organizations by encouraging them to participate in more processes and leverage their networks to broaden communication about MPO work.

Our analysis of our engagement efforts has identified gaps in our engagement activities, primarily among constituents in environmental justice and limited English proficiency communities. As part of a strategy to address these geographic and demographic gaps in engagement, we have increased the level of direct engagement with advocacy and community organizations representing these communities. This engagement includes tailored, subject-specific updates on MPO activities and studies, more frequent conversations and meetings with the staff and leadership of these organizations, and more deliberate inclusion of these organizations in focus groups and advisory groups.

In the near future, we will be incorporating community engagement software into our engagement program to improve the tracking of quantitative and qualitative public input data, including the geographic distribution of input, connecting comments to specific MPO activities, and documentation of the development of relationships with advocacy and community organizations.

14. *We understand that a communications audit began in 2021. What prompted the decision to initiate this audit, and what did/does it entail? What are the goals/next steps?*

The decision to perform a communications audit grew out of the input gathered during the strategic planning process in 2020 and 2021. This input led to the marketing and public presentation goal (goal 7) in the [strategic plan](#), which calls for the agency to “develop, invest in, and implement communications and marketing strategies that articulate a clear, concise, and compelling mission, vision, and core values to existing and prospective partners and the field.” Comments influencing the development of this goal included a lack of clarity around the dual organizational identities of CTPS

and the MPO, concern that the design of the agency's web presence was not keeping up with peers, feedback that some external messaging was too complex for easy consumption by the region's residents, and requests for more consistent branding across programs and publications.

The audit is considered a first step toward the creation of a communications plan; it will serve as a means of establishing the foundation of what materials and channels are used well by the agency and where improvements or growth are possible. The audit involves the assembly of a digest of representative materials—print, web, social, and in-person—for individuals to react to and comment on. Internal interviews are complete, and the imminent next steps are external interviews with select stakeholders.

The agency has identified three departments that will be most involved in reviewing the interview feedback and making recommendations for improvement and enhancement: communications and engagement, graphics, and editorial. These three departments together have eight full-time staff members in roles that have a direct impact on how the agency communicates its work to the MPO Board and the public at large.

7 TRANSIT

15. The previous certification review included a recommendation to identify potential voluntary reporters to the National Transit Database (NTD). Please explain the process used to identify potential voluntary reporters and describe any outreach activities performed.

MPO staff identified services within the TMA that were not known to report to NTD and potentially could be voluntary reporters. MPO staff shared this list with the MBTA, MassDOT's OTP, and MassDOT's Rail and Transit division to identify additional potential reporters. The final list included private bus operators, TMAs, ferry operators, intercity bus operators, colleges and universities, Massachusetts Port Authority (Massport), the Massachusetts Convention Center, The Longwood Collective (formerly MASCO), and municipal transit systems.

MPO staff then reviewed the list to verify the eligibility of the identified potential voluntary reporters. This process included contacting some of the service providers to determine whether the service was already being reported to NTD, whether it is open to the public, and other eligibility

requirements. For commuter rail, commuter bus, and ferry services with maximum one-way trip times exceeding 90 minutes, NTD requires verification that at least 50 percent of the passengers using the service make a return trip on the same day across all service runs for one year. These data were not readily available, and would require a passenger survey, so we were unable to confirm whether the services in this category would be eligible to report to NTD. The final list of potential reporters and our determination as to whether they would be eligible to report to NTD was shared with MassDOT staff. Further follow-up on this activity was suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on transit service.

8 BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PLANNING AND SAFETY

16. What is your process for selecting bicycle and pedestrian studies/analyses?

The selection of bicycle and pedestrian studies is part of the UPWP development process. The UPWP identifies all studies that MPO staff will undertake within a fiscal year, including the bicycle and pedestrian studies. The annual creation of the UPWP begins with a public solicitation for ideas, which may include bicycle and pedestrian studies, and MPO staff are encouraged to propose study concepts. The combined public and staff suggestions that the MPO receives are presented to the UPWP Committee, which ranks the proposed studies and recommends a list of studies to the full MPO board. The MPO board ultimately votes on the UPWP and the studies included.

17. After studies are complete, generally how are findings/recommendations advanced (e.g., “Locations with High Bicycle and Pedestrian Crash Rates in the Boston Region MPO Area” series and “Bicycle Network Gaps: Feasibility Evaluation”)?

Studies such as the “Locations with High Bicycle and Pedestrian Crash Rates in the Boston Region MPO Area” and “Bicycle Network Gaps: Feasibility Evaluation” analyses are intended as tools for municipalities and advocates to use when applying for funding to implement the recommended improvements outlined in the studies. The evaluations also illustrate the need for changes at the assessed locations by documenting the issues and concerns for people who walk and bike, which helps members of the public understand why municipalities and advocates are pursuing bicycle and pedestrian improvements. MPO staff plan to develop

a strategy for engaging with stakeholders to advance implementation of the recommended improvements for these and other MPO studies.

18. *What is the status of your Pedestrian Report Card Assessment Tool? Is this well-used by the public, and how is data used by MPO staff for planning purposes?*

The Pedestrian Report Card Assessment (PRCA) tool is not well used by the public despite publishing instruction manuals on the MPO's website. MPO staff use the PRCA tool in studies to evaluate current and proposed conditions for pedestrian travel. Using the tool in this way demonstrates how an evaluated location functions for people walking and illustrates how proposed changes to the area would impact pedestrian travel.

a. *Similarly, what is the status of the Bicycle Report Card dashboard project?*

The Bicycle Report Card dashboard project has not yet been funded as a UPWP study, so the MPO does not currently have a dashboard for the purpose of displaying the Boston region's Bicycle Report Card scores.

19. *There has been a lot of bike/ped and complete streets work occurring at the State in recent years. How do you coordinate with MassDOT on counting/data collection efforts, bike/ped planning, gap analyses, and other initiatives to avoid duplicative efforts?*

As part of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Support Activities program, MPO staff attend state and regional meetings, including the Massachusetts Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board and Landline Coalition meetings. These meetings are attended by employees from state, regional, municipal, and advocacy entities, and feature presentations and discussions about bicycle- and pedestrian-related work throughout the Boston region. This ensures that the MPO is aware of current work efforts region-wide and prevents duplication. In addition, MPO staff communicate directly with MassDOT staff regarding efforts related to bicycle and pedestrian travel.

20. *It looks like the last regional bike plan was published in 2008. Is this still used? If not, what are next steps in this area to keep the plan current?*

The MPO's 2008 regional bike plan is not currently used by MPO staff. MassDOT published its Bicycle Transportation Plan in 2019 and provided an update on its bicycle-related investments in 2021. MPO staff determined that developing a regional plan while MassDOT's efforts were underway would not lead to the best use of resources at the time but can be reconsidered in the future. MPO staff are now fortunate to have the insight provided by MassDOT's bicycle transportation plan when planning for bicycle transportation in the Boston MPO region.

b. *How does your work coincide with the MA bike and pedestrian statewide transportation planning efforts?*

MPO staff supported MassDOT's work to develop its Bicycle Transportation Plan and Pedestrian Transportation Plan. MPO staff contributed to the 2019 publication of the Bicycle Transportation Plan by providing estimates of the number and distribution of short bicycle trips throughout the state using the statewide travel demand model and by helping MassDOT establish the methodology used to calculate the Potential Demand factor for its Potential for Everyday Bicycling equation.

9 FREIGHT

21. *It appears that many of the MPO's freight studies have been conducted pre-COVID, and it is great to see that the UPWP includes studies to analyze COVID impacts to transportation and curb management. Are freight stakeholders involved in the outreach and research for these activities?*

While the FFY 2023 UPWP studies are still being scoped, the intention is to involve freight stakeholders deeply in the scoping and in the actual study process. The new freight planning manager has spent much of FFY 2022 engaging in a series of ongoing relationship-building conversations with freight stakeholders, with the intention to leverage those contacts for future studies. The municipal stakeholders in the North Suffolk freight study in the FFY 2023 UPWP have furnished CTPS and MAPC with lists of specific companies to reach out to, and we plan to engage them in the study. We also engage with Massport on a variety of freight topics, including this one.

22. *Has the approach to freight planning changed for the MPO and its partners in recent years, particularly as the MPO develops its next LRTP? What freight trends are most*

critical for the next LRTP and for the MPA region (or the TMA region)?

The MPO's approach to freight planning is currently in the middle of an evolution. We are planning an update to the Freight Planning Action Plan (last updated in 2019) for FFY 2023 or 2024 (pending conversations with MassDOT about its relationship to its statewide freight plan). The Freight Planning Action Plan will be tied closely to new principles and analysis from Destination 2050, the MPO's upcoming LRTP. We are focusing closely on building relationships with freight stakeholders and integrating freight planning with other forms of planning, such as land use, environmental planning, and equity planning. In particular, we have begun working very closely with our colleagues at MAPC on several initiatives, including a planned FFY 2023 UPWP study on decarbonizing and greening freight and logistics in the North Suffolk area (East Boston, Chelsea, Revere, Everett, Winthrop).

A few recent and upcoming activities include the following:

- Creating a brand-new [web page for the MPO's freight planning](#)
- Modernizing our freight data infrastructure, including transforming data (mainly truck counts) previously only published in static tables in reports into a spatial format that is useful for analysis and can eventually be posted to CTPS' to-be-modernized data catalog.
- Working on a memorandum (fourth quarter FFY 2022) summarizing the status of shared truck and bus priority lanes around the country and world, to contextualize and support the planned implementation of such lanes on Summer Street in the South Boston Waterfront (Seaport) area. This memorandum places us at the cutting edge of interest in such shared infrastructure and is supported by the City of Boston, the MBTA, and Massport.
- Producing mapped data on past freight rail customers in the Boston area, with the ultimate goal of researching shipper/receiver modal choice
- Training MPO field/data collection staff on truck counting methods
- Working with MassDOT to familiarize ourselves with and use new data products available through The Eastern Transportation Coalition's Transportation Data Marketplace

- Developing an initiative to coordinate regional freight planning and land use planning (something that is mentioned as a priority in the current MassDOT Freight Plan)

We are closely tracking trends in freight that require analysis and understanding, including

- E-commerce and its impact on the logistics sector (coordinating closely with MAPC);
- the impact of Just-in-Time logistics and potential post-COVID-19 reshoring of production and logistics;
- decarbonization of the freight system, which is expected to proceed at varying speeds and with varying priority depending on the sector;
- environmental justice concerns;
- road safety; and
- Concern for inducing modal shift between trucks and rail/water.

We plan to conduct intensive engagement with relevant stakeholders to refine priorities and identify new ones in advance of preparing the next Freight Planning Action Plan.

10 PERFORMANCE BASED PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING

23. We see your PBPP website is updated with the latest Federal performance reporting. However, please explain the status of the Boston Region Performance Dashboard. A lot of data seems dated. Is this static at this point since the establishment of the Federal performance measures and related reporting requirements?

MPO staff are working to identify a new platform for the [MPO Performance Dashboard](#) that will be easier for staff to maintain and expand so that it reflects information of the greatest interest to MPO members, staff, and regional stakeholders. The existing performance dashboard was developed by a former staff member prior to the full rollout of federal performance rules and guidance. The Dashboard was designed in a format that is visually interesting but can be challenging to maintain and expand to accommodate new content, including new visualizations. Staff have developed a draft list of dashboard requirements and are exploring platforms, such as Tableau, that may be better suited for hosting the dashboard. This Performance

Dashboard update is part of a larger agency-wide conversation regarding dashboard application development and maintenance. In the meantime, MPO staff are identifying data that can be easily updated in the dashboard in the near term. Some data sources for existing metrics are not issued, or cannot be updated, as regularly as others.

24. Please describe your TIP Before-and-After studies and how these are being incorporated into your performance evaluations and investment decisions.

The MPO undertook before-and-after studies of TIP funded projects to evaluate the effectiveness of selected TIP projects and the anticipated improvements to safety, traffic flow, and other factors. Measuring project effectiveness is important in evaluating whether the employed strategies work well and are suitable for application in other similar situations.

These studies measure, to the extent practicable, the transportation, safety, and related benefits for a sample of TIP projects subsequent to completion. Possible implications for future TIP project selection are identified and discussed.

The safety and traffic flow conditions prior to improvement (Before Data) are obtained from the materials that were submitted as part of the original TIP evaluation process. In most cases, conditions are obtained through a functional design report (FDR). FDRs are used as a basic decision tool for infrastructure planning and generally represent a project design at a 25 percent level and is a requirement for a TIP project submittal. Current traffic conditions and data (After Data) are observed in the field and an updated statewide crash database is reviewed to develop a recent crash history.

The differences between pre-improvement and current values of quantifiable metrics are calculated. These differences serve as the basis for analyzing the project impacts. These quantifiable direct comparisons and supplemental information are used in evaluating the degree to which each project in the studies is providing benefits or generating negative impacts.

The findings from these Before-and-After studies provide guidance on what type of improvements are effective and should be included in future TIP projects. The findings are also vital in the ongoing corridor and intersection studies that the MPO undertakes each year, ensuring that the MPO studies include effective and proven multi-modal transportation and safety recommendations that benefit all roadway users.

25. Please share how your PBPP program has matured since the last certification review. Has the MPO developed its own performance measures for its goal areas beyond what is federally required?

The MPO has not yet adopted performance measures or performance targets that are separate from those required through federal rules. MPO staff continue to work to integrate performance-based planning more fully into the work of the MPO. Examples include the following:

- The MPO's performance-based planning and programming (PBPP) manager worked closely with the TIP Manager to identify opportunities to integrate federally required performance measures into the updated TIP evaluation criteria and to refresh and improve the criteria overall. The MPO's PBPP program helped support coordination with Transportation for America and the State Smart Transportation Initiative for the criteria update, as described in Question 8.
- The PBPP manager continues to refine and expand the information in Chapter 4, "Performance Analysis," of the [TIP](#) about the relationship between MPO-selected projects and (1) federal performance areas and (2) MPO goal areas. This chapter of the TIP includes tables and a [graphic](#) that summarize the contributions MPO-selected projects are expected to make towards improving performance in these areas. Performance details for individual MPO-funded TIP projects are available in Table A-2 of the [FFYs 2022-26](#) and [FFYs 2023-27](#) TIPs. MPO staff also characterize the impact of MassDOT and transit agency investments on these performance areas, to the extent feasible.
- During the development process for the FFYs 2022–26 TIP, MPO staff conducted an exercise where they shared a series of illustrative scenarios that described how various combinations of projects might affect transportation equity, safety, and greenhouse-gas-related performance measures. These examples enabled MPO members to see tradeoffs between selecting different packages of projects. In future years, the MPO may make reviews of scenarios like these a more formal part of its project selection process as this type of exercise helps to strengthen the links between the MPO's performance targets and the potential outcomes of the MPO's investment decisions.

- The MPO's PBPP program supports staff's exploration of new tools and methods to support this kind of planning work. For example, the MPO's PBPP manager has worked with MassDOT to access and exchange information about use of the [Conveyal](#) destination access analysis application, and the MPO's PBPP program has supported staff as they have learned to use this tool. Conveyal is now being used in MPO studies and is expected to generate future returns for the MPO's PBPP activities.

MPO staff have also continued to develop and maintain successful ongoing relationships with partner agencies to carry out the MPO's PBPP process. Staff provided ideas, data, and feedback on target-setting approaches when working with MassDOT and have developed successful collaborative relationships with transit agencies to share performance data and targets with the MPO (including information related to transit safety performance). Staff also continue to participate in webinars, peer exchanges, and working groups to share information and explore ways to expand the MPO's PBPP practice. Also, the MPO staff member chiefly responsible for performance-based planning and programming is now the manager for the MPO's LRTP, and is using development of the next LRTP Needs Assessment as an opportunity to generate information for performance-based planning and programming.

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By Telephone:

857.702.3700 (voice)

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