

TRANS REPORT

TRANSPORTATION NEWS FROM THE BOSTON REGION METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

MPO Focuses on Local-Member Election Process

The MPO intends to increase participation in the election process for MPO-member municipalities (“local members”), so it is boosting its outreach to nonmember communities. Acting on behalf of the MPO, the MBTA Advisory Board and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) will reach out to all municipalities in the region, with a particular emphasis on those MAPC sub-regions (the North Suburban Planning Council, Three Rivers Interlocal Council, and South Shore Coalition) that currently do not have an elected member. Information on the election process and timetable will be made available to all member communities, and MPO election recruitment meetings and candidates nights will be scheduled in areas convenient to communities not currently represented on the Boston Region MPO.

In developing these plans, the MPO first reviewed the current process for electing municipal representatives. Four public meetings were held in September and October 2005 to explain and solicit comments on the election process and to ask the public to suggest changes. MPO members hope that these changes in the election process will provide for geographic diversity and will encourage local MPO members to be responsive to the region as a whole.

Notification of the election and a call for nomination papers will be sent to all chief elected officials of MPO municipalities in March. Stay tuned to *TRANS-REPORT* for more details.

MPO to Hold Its Third Open House in March

The MPO is continuing public outreach efforts for its long-range transportation plan, *JOURNEY TO 2030*, by hosting its next open house on Tuesday, March 21 (see sidebar for details). The event will focus on environmental justice and the 2030 baseline computer model projections. MPO members and staff will be in attendance to hear participants’ views on topics related to *JOURNEY TO 2030*. All members of the public are invited to attend and share their ideas!

Two identical open-house sessions will be held, one at midday and one in the evening. First, MPO staff will discuss the MPO’s *JOURNEY TO 2030* outreach to low-income and minority communities and will explain the planned analysis of access and mobility in the region and plans for addressing those issues in *JOURNEY TO 2030*.

Following that discussion, there will be a presentation and discussion about the 2030 baseline computer model projections of the region’s growth through 2030. These projections will help the MPO understand the population and employment trends that will affect transportation needs over the next three decades. Maps will be made available to participants to identify their transportation needs for the MPO’s consideration.

In other public involvement news, MPO staff, through the “Invite Us Over” program, held two meetings in February: one with the Association for Public Transportation (APT) about transit expansion in the region, and one with officials and community groups from the City of Somerville to identify ways to stimulate

THE BOSTON REGION MPO INVITES YOU TO A TRANSPORTATION OPEN HOUSE

Date: Tuesday, March 21
Midday Session: 12:00 P.M.–2:00 P.M.
Evening Session: 5:00 P.M.–7:00 P.M.
Place: MPO Conference Room
 Suite 2150
 State Transportation Building
 10 Park Plaza, Boston

PRESENTATION SCHEDULE

Regional Equity: *How does the MPO address the transportation needs of low-income and minority communities?*

12:00 P.M. and 5:00 P.M.
Presented by Jonathan Church, CTPS

2030 Baseline Model Results: *What will the population characteristics of the region be in 2030, and how should the MPO meet the future transportation needs of the region?*

1:00 P.M. and 6:00 P.M.
Presented by Sanjay Kaul, CTPS

and support economic development in Somerville.

The MPO has received very positive feedback on its “Invite Us Over” program to date. If your organization or group is interested in hosting the MPO to discuss your transportation needs over the next 25 years, please contact Jared Fijalkowski at j_fijalkowski@bostonmpo.org or (617) 973-7092.

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TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE ACTION ITEMS

On February 16 the Boston Region MPO's Transportation Planning and Programming Committee approved for public review a draft amendment of the fiscal year (FY) 2006 and FY 2007 elements of the FY 2006–2010 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The draft amendment incorporates changes included in a previously circulated, proposed amendment of the FY 2006 element (released on February 2), and also includes changes in the region's bridge program and some local and regional roadway and enhancement projects. To download a copy of the draft amendment, or to find out more about the TIP and its development, visit www.bostonmpo.org or contact the TIP Coordinator, Sean Daly, at (617) 973-7140 or seandaly@ctps.org.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL UPDATE

At its February meeting, the Advisory Council and guests were briefed by the MassRIDES project manager for the Massachusetts Safe Routes to School Program and by Providence and Worcester Railroad Company representatives on rail freight public/private partnerships.

In March the Advisory Council will learn about the proposed improvements to the intersection of Routes 126 and 135 in Framingham. The Freight Committee and Regional Transportation Plan Committee are tentatively scheduled to meet at 1:00 P.M. and 2:30 P.M., respectively, preceding the March 8 Advisory Council meeting.

ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE MBTA (AACT) UPDATE

At the February AACT meeting, Office of Transportation Access staff updated AACT members on many issues, including the testing of new buses and the Green Line's low-floor cars. Members also received a progress report on current MBTA construction projects from the MBTA's Design and Construction department. On March 14 at 9:00 A.M., AACT will hold a "Communication Roundtable" for board members. If you are interested in attending the roundtable, please RSVP by March 1 to Janie Guion at (617) 973-7507 (voice), (617) 973-7089 (TTY), or guion@ctps.org.

Amtrak Expands Revenue-Management Fare System to Acela Express and Metroliner Services

Following the successful introduction of revenue management on many of its Northeast Corridor trains last year, Amtrak expanded the practice to its Acela Express and Metroliner services in February. Revenue management, already in use by airlines and other industries, is a fare system based on customer demand: fares are lower for trips with lower demand and higher capacity, and higher for trips with higher demand and lower capacity.



Amtrak's Acela Express

Passengers with flexible travel times can take advantage of reduced fares on lower-demand trains—in some cases up to 15 percent less than January's lowest fares—by purchasing tickets early and traveling during off-peak hours. Since October 2005, when Amtrak introduced revenue-managed fares for some of its trains in the Northeast Corridor, reduced fares have been

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MBTA Short Notes

Ruggles Station Busway Reopens

MBTA General Manager Daniel A. Grabauskas and local officials reopened the Ruggles Station busway viaduct on February 6 after a year-long closure. The



busway viaduct, which serves as a transfer point between bus routes, the Orange Line, and commuter rail, was renovated to improve transit connections at the station. The \$3.2 million rehabilitation project included replacing the existing deck and portions of the sidewalks and repairing or replacing all deteriorated portions of the structure. In addition, access from Ruggles Street to the viaduct's sidewalks was updated to meet ADA requirements.

MBTA and MBCR Launch New Web-Based Service Center

The MBTA and its commuter rail service provider, MBCR, introduced their new Internet-based Customer Service Center in February. The Center features online customer service and feedback forms, answers to common questions, and downloadable system maps and station information. The new service is designed to provide commuter rail customers with accurate, up-to-date information and to provide a direct line of communication between customers and management. For more information, visit www.mbcrl.net or www.mbta.com.

MBTA Congratulates New Engineers

A graduation ceremony was hosted at South Station in late January by MBTA and MBCR officials for the five graduates of a year-long training course for becoming licensed locomotive engineers. This is the first MBCR graduating class to be trained in Boston, as prior training courses were coordinated by Amtrak and were held outside of New England. The graduates are now Class I Passenger Engineers, the highest locomotive engineer certification attainable by federal law.

MBTA Sends Power Substation to New Orleans

The MBTA, under the direction of Governor Romney, responded to the devastation of New Orleans caused by Hurricane Katrina by helping the New Orleans Regional Transit Authority (NORTA) reopen a large portion of one of the city's three streetcar lines. During the flooding associated with Hurricane Katrina, most of NORTA's power substations were destroyed. After reaching out to a number of transit authorities nationwide for assistance, NORTA identified the MBTA as the only agency that has a mobile power substation, a machine that converts electricity from the local electri-



Canal Streetcar Line

cal grid into usable power for streetcars. The MBTA acquired the mobile substation in 1984 and has used it on a number of occasions, including the Kenmore Station flooding in 1996 that wiped out that station's power infrastructure.

This substation will be used to restore power on the portion of New Orleans' Canal Streetcar Line that has not yet reopened. It was scheduled to arrive in New Orleans in early February following refurbishment in Virginia. NORTA officials expect to use the substation for approximately one year.

New Web Site for Federal Transportation Grants

A new Web site that makes it easier to track and apply for federal grants, including transportation grants, is now available. The new site, www.grants.gov, brings grant-making agencies and grant applicants together, making grant management easier and more efficient.

Managed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, in partnership with numerous federal and state

agencies and 11 commissions, the Web site is a single source of information on federal

grant opportunities, and provides simplified, electronic grant applications.

Following the federal government's Electronic Government (E-Gov) Initiative, more agencies are converting their application process to electronic submission. To ease the transition, grants.gov is ramping up its online user support tools, user aides, and personalized support. For more information, visit the Web site.



MassPike Contract for New Allston Turnaround Goes Out to Bid

The Massachusetts Turnpike Authority (MassPike) has advertised for bids for construction of a new, westbound-to-eastbound turnaround near the Allston/Cambridge toll plaza. The new turnaround will eliminate illegal, dangerous U-turns at the Allston interchange and difficult, time-consuming U-turns on Cambridge Street for accessing the eastbound Turnpike. The turnaround will be accessible only to multipassenger vehicles, such as taxicabs and buses, that are equipped with FAST LANE transponders.

During peak periods, the U-turn can save commuters several minutes per trip. Recent traffic analysis indicated that a trip from the Boston Conference and Exhibition Center (BCEC) to the Sheraton Boston Hotel in the Back Bay was about seven minutes faster via the U-turn, while a trip from Logan Airport to the Fairmont Copley Plaza was about 11 minutes faster.

A contract is expected to be awarded in April, giving the contractor an entire construction season to complete the work. The turnaround is expected to be completed by the fall of 2006.

Massport Reports Freight Handling Increase, New Construction Projects

The Massachusetts Port Authority (Massport) reported in February that the amount of cargo handled at Conley Terminal significantly increased in 2005. Total container tonnage climbed 8 per-

	2004	2005	Increase
Container tonnage	1,345,759	1,453,350	8%
TEUs	175,444	188,869	8%

cent, while the number of cargo containers, expressed as TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units) also increased by about 8 percent (see the table below).

To meet the increased demand for cargo-handling facilities, Massport is undertaking several construction projects. At Conley Terminal in South Boston, contractors completed the first phase of a \$25 million capacity-enhancement project in 2005. The second, final phase is underway and is expected to be completed in December 2006. This project, which will increase Conley Terminal's cargo-handling capacity by nearly 50 percent, involves realigning the yard, repaving, purchasing rubber-tire gantry cranes, and moving maintenance and repair functions.

Another Massport project, also scheduled to begin in 2006, is the development of a state-of-the-art intermodal cargo and warehousing facility on a 30-acre site at Massport's Marine Terminal (MMT), also known as the North Jetty. The facility will include three large warehouses for storing and processing food and freight. A 6.3-acre site nearby will be used for the storage and distribution of waterborne bulk commodities, such as cement and salt.

Another project scheduled for 2006 is the Boston Harbor maintenance dredging project. Several years' silt accumulation will be removed to restore the harbor's major shipping channels to a depth of 40 feet. The project will include the Main Ship Channel near Spectacle Island, the Upper Reserve Channel, and the Navy Dry Dock approach.

MEETING CALENDAR

The public is welcome to attend the following transportation-related meetings. A photo ID is usually required for access to meeting sites.

AT THE STATE TRANSPORTATION BUILDING, 10 PARK PLAZA, BOSTON

Thursday, March 2
**Boston Region MPO
 Transportation Planning and
 Programming Committee
 Meeting** 10:00 A.M.
 MPO Conference Room
 Suite 2150

Tuesday, March 7
**Urban Ring Citizen Advisory
 Committee** 6:00 P.M.
 Conference Rooms 2 and 3

Wednesday, March 8
**Regional Transportation
 Advisory Council** 3:00 P.M.
 Conference Room 4

Tuesday, March 14
**Access Advisory Committee
 to the MBTA: Communication
 Roundtable** 9:00 A.M.
*To RSVP, contact Janie Guion at
 (617) 973-7507 (voice), (617)973-7089
 (TTY), or guion@ctps.org.*

Thursday, March 16
**Boston Region MPO
 Transportation Planning and
 Programming Committee Meeting** 10:00 A.M.
 MPO Conference Room
 Suite 2150

Wednesday, March 22
**Access Advisory Committee
 to the MBTA** 1:00 P.M.
 Conference Room 2

Monday, March 27
**MBTA Rider Oversight
 Committee** 4:15 P.M.
 Conference Rooms 1, 2, and 3

Thursday, March 30
**Boston Region MPO
 Transportation Planning and
 Programming Committee
 Meeting** 10:00 A.M.
 Conference Room 4

Thursday, April 6
**Boston Region MPO
 Transportation Planning and
 Programming Committee
 Meeting** 10:00 A.M.
 Conference Room 4

Call (617) 222-5179 for date
MBTA Board of Directors 1:00 P.M.
 Conference Rooms 2 and 3

AT OTHER BOSTON AREA LOCATIONS

Wednesday, March 1
**28th Annual Disability Issues
 Legislative Reception** 10:30 A.M.
 Grand Staircase Hall
 State House, Boston

Tuesday, March 7
Air Quality Symposium 8:30 A.M.
 Harvard School of Public Health
 677 Huntington Avenue, Room G3
 Boston

Tuesday, March 7
**New Charles River Basin
 Citizens Advisory Committee** 4:00 P.M.
 Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr
 Hale Room, 26th Floor
 60 State Street, Boston

Saturday, March 18
**Citizen Planner Training
 Collaborative Annual Conference** 8:00 A.M.
 Hogan Conference Center
 Holy Cross College, Worcester
 Visit www.umass.edu/masscptc or call
 (413) 545-2188 to register by March 10.

Thursday, March 30
WalkBoston Greenway Walk 4:00 P.M.
 Meet at corner of Canal and
 Causeway streets (near North Station),
 Boston

WalkBoston Annual Meeting 5:30 P.M.
 Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr
 Hale Room, 26th Floor
 60 State Street, Boston

Meeting dates and times are subject to change: please
 call (617) 973-7119 for confirmation. Additional
 transportation meetings open to the public are listed on
 the Boston Region MPO Web site, www.bostonmpo.org.

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very popular, as evidenced by an increase in off-peak travel.

Amtrak does not charge a fee for exchanging tickets for different trains or times of departure. Passengers are only required to pay the difference in fare for higher-priced tickets.

For more information, visit www.amtrak.com or call 800-USA-RAIL.

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