



MAKING SAFER ROUTES TO SCHOOL IN MASSACHUSETTS
Page 2

MBTA NOTES
Page 2

STATE, REGIONAL BICYCLE PLANS UNDERWAY
Page 3

BOSTON REGION MPO ACTIVITIES
Page 3

ADDITIONAL CHAPTER 90 FUNDS RELEASED
Page 4

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

September 7 (Thursday)

Boston Region MPO Transportation Planning and Programming Committee. Conference Room 4. 10:00 AM

Followed by: TIP Criteria Subcommittee. MPO Conference Room, Suite 2150.

September 12 (Tuesday)

Urban Ring Citizens Advisory Committee. Conference Room 2 and 3. 4:00 PM

September 13 (Wednesday)

Regional Transportation Advisory Council. Conference Room 4. 3:00 PM

September 21 (Thursday)

Boston Region MPO Transportation Planning and Programming Committee. Conference Room 4. 10:00 AM

Calendar cont. on p. 2

MPO Approves Transportation Funding Programs

After more than six months of gathering and processing project information, project evaluations, and extensive public comments, the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) approved two documents that lay out the transportation spending plans for the region over the next four years. The MPO, which is responsible for programming federal funds

for transit and highway projects and studies in the 101-community Greater Boston area, adopted the fiscal year (FY) 2007 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) and FYs 2007–2010 Transportation Improvement Program and Air Quality Conformity Determination (TIP) following a month-long public comment period that concluded on August 15.

The new UPWP, detailing transportation planning activities for the upcoming federal fiscal year that begins in October, includes over 80 projects. While most are long-term or multiyear projects, several new projects have been added.

The Bicycle/Pedestrian Mobility in Urban Centers study will result in recommendations for improving conditions for bicyclists and pedestrians in six to eight urban communities in the region.

The Route 60, Malden and Medford, Mobility Improvement study will include analyses of the causes of congestion and recommendations for improving traffic flow and safety along the Route 60 corridor.

The Newton Corner Rotary study will enter its second phase. Using results from the first phase, which was a modeling study, designs for possible long-term improvements to the rotary will be analyzed. The MPO will also study ways to improve safety at as many as 15 traffic locations in the region that have a high number of crashes and/or delays.

MPO Hosts Open House

PUBLIC DISCUSSES LONG-RANGE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANS

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization's draft spending programs for fiscal years (FYs) 2007–2010 and the MPO's preferred land use alternative were the topics of this summer's MPO Open House, which was held on August 1 at the State Transportation Building. The event was organized to gather input from members of the public on the draft certification documents, and to provide information on the latest develop-

ments of JOURNEY TO 2030, the MPO's long-range transportation plan.

Metropolitan Area Planning Council staff presented the Smart Growth Plus land use alternative that MPO planners are using to better understand how the region might develop over the next

several decades, and to anticipate future needs of the transportation system. MPO staff then presented forecasts of travel conditions based on the Smart Growth Plus projections.

The MPO's projections are based on the assumptions that

● *Open House cont. on p. 2*

● *Funding cont. on p. 4*



The members of the Boston Region MPO: Executive Office of Transportation, Cities of Boston, Everett, Newton, and Salem, Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority Advisory Board, Massachusetts Highway Department, Massachusetts Port Authority, Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Regional Transportation Advisory Council, Towns of Bedford, Framingham, and Hopkinton

Making Safer Routes to School in Massachusetts

Massachusetts is ramping up its efforts to improve walking and bicycling conditions for children traveling to schools in the commonwealth, with support from the Safe Routes to School Program, which is administered by MassRIDES.

The program's focus in Massachusetts is on educating elementary school students, parents, and community members on the value of walking, bicycling, carpooling,

using public transit, and taking school buses for travel to and from school. The program aims to increase physical activity and safety, and to decrease traffic congestion and air pollution.

The Safe Routes to School program is being implemented at a time when fewer children are walking to



school and obesity rates are climbing among elementary-school-age children.

The ultimate goal of the program is to establish healthy lifetime habits by engaging students in alternative trip options, such as walking and bicycling. In addition, since travel to school accounts for up to 25 percent of a community's morning traffic, the increased use of shared rides and nonmotorized travel provides the additional benefits of reducing traffic congestion and improving air quality.

A Safe Routes to School tool kit will be sent to all elementary school principals in Massachusetts. The tool kit includes the Safe Routes to School Manual, which is also available for downloading at the MassRIDES Web site, www.commute.com.

Currently, 17 schools are partnered with the Safe Routes to School program. If you know of a school that might benefit from this program, visit the MassRIDES Web site for more information.

Safe Routes to School programs throughout the United States are funded through the Federal Highway Administration in accordance with the provisions of SAFETEA-LU, the current federal transportation legislation.

MBTA Notes

BOSTON—PROVIDENCE COMMUTER RAIL INCREASES RUNS

In July, the MBTA and the Massachusetts Bay Commuter Railroad Company, which operates commuter rail service for the MBTA, added four more weekday roundtrips—for a total of 15 daily runs—on the Providence/Stoughton commuter rail line, formerly known as the Attleboro/Stoughton commuter rail line. Service has also been extended into the late evening hours. Previously, the latest train departed South Station at 8:15 PM. There are now three departures between 9:00 PM and midnight. Weekend service has also been added, with nine roundtrips on Saturday and seven on Sunday.

“More than a thousand people a day are boarding our trains in Providence,” said MBTA General Manager Daniel A. Grabauskas. “We look forward to attracting even more customers with the new service.”

NEW PLATFORM AT ROCKPORT STATION IMPROVES ACCESS

The Rockport commuter rail station is now more accessible to persons with disabilities and the elderly as a result of recent upgrades. A “mini-high” platform with a canopy, railings, and a ramp has been installed, along with improved lighting.

“The MBTA strives to provide customers of all abilities public transportation that is accessible, comfortable, and safe,” said Grabauskas, at a ribbon-cutting ceremony in late June.

Calendar cont. from p. 1

September 25 (Monday)
MBTA Rider Oversight Committee. *Conference Rooms 1, 2, and 3. 4:30 PM*

September 27 (Wednesday)
Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA (AACT). *Conference Room 2. 5:30 PM*

AT OTHER BOSTON AREA LOCATIONS

September 6 (Wednesday)
MassHighway Public Hearing: Reconstruction of Route 228 in Hingham. *Hingham Town Hall, Central Hearing Room, 210 Central Street, Hingham. 7:00 PM*

September 12 (Tuesday)
Charles River Basin Citizens Advisory Committee. *Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr, Hale Room, 26th Floor, 60 State Street, Boston. 4:00 PM*

September 16 (Saturday)
WalkBoston Workshop: Pedestrian Advocacy 101. *Cambridge City Hall Annex, 344 Broadway, Cambridge. 9:00 AM. To RSVP, call (617) 367-9255.*

MPO Open House

● *Open House cont. from p. 1*
development will be more concentrated close to city and town centers and transit stations, and that additional land, which has been identified as high-priority for conservation, will be preserved. This type of development would likely lead to more people choosing to use transit or nonmotorized transportation options, such as walking and bicycling.

Following the presentations, participants and staff engaged in a lively discussion about the MPO's long-range planning work, the draft documents, and specific projects and studies being considered for future funding.

State and Regional Bicycle Plans Underway

Two projects to improve bicycling in Massachusetts and the Boston region are currently underway. The Massachusetts Bicycle Plan

Update, whose primary purpose is to develop a prioritized plan of on- and off-road bicycling improve-



ments in order to implement a statewide bicycling network, is being prepared by the Executive Office of Transportation. The Regional Bicycle Plan, an MPO report being prepared by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), will include a description of current conditions for bicycling and recommendations for ways to encourage bicycling in the region.

The Massachusetts Bicycle

Plan Update will be a useful resource, not only for developing a statewide bicycling network, but also for improving bicycle transportation for

all purposes, including recreation and tourism, which in turn may stimulate economic develop-

ment. The plan will also address informational and educational programs, and could be used to increase coordination between state, regional, and local agencies.

The purpose of the MPO's Regional Bicycle Plan is to encourage bicycling in order to improve public health, reduce pollution and traffic congestion, and decrease transportation costs. It is guided by JOURNEY to 2030 (the MPO's Transportation

Plan), and MAPC's MetroFuture project.

The goals of the Regional Bicycle Plan are to:

- Increase the number of bicycle trips in each community
- Make the inclusion of bicycling and bicycle accommodations standard operating procedure in state and regional planning
- Improve the process for evaluating and prioritizing bicycle project proposals
- Provide a resource for local initiatives
- Simplify and coordinate funding programs in cooperation with state agencies
- Increase regional knowledge about bicycling

While 66 percent of all trips in the region are five miles or less, travel by bicycle accounts for less than one percent of all trips in the region.

Both plans will be strengthened by MassHighway's Project Development and Design Guide, which supports the accommodation of bicycles in roadway and bridge project planning.

For more information on the Massachusetts Bicycle Plan Update, contact Josh Lehman at josh.lehman@eot.state.ma.us.

A draft of the Regional Bicycle Plan is currently under review, and the final document is expected to be completed in the fall. For more information, contact MAPC at bike_plan@mapc.org.

Boston Region MPO Activities

BOSTON REGION MPO ACTION ITEMS

The MPO is ready for its new fiscal year following the endorsement of the fiscal years (FYs) 2007–2010 Transportation Improvement Program and Air Quality Conformity Determination (TIP) and the FY 2007 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). See page 1 for more information on these programs.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL UPDATE

At their August meeting, Regional Transportation Advisory Council members and guests were briefed by MPO staff on the results of the Suburban Transit Opportunities Study and the Regionwide Suburban Transit Opportunities Study–Phase II.

The Advisory Council also

discussed its recommendations on the draft FY 2007 UPWP and draft FYs 2007–2010 TIP.

For times and locations of the September meetings of the Advisory Council and Freight Committee, see the calendar on page 1.

For more information about the Advisory Council, contact Bill Moore at (617) 973-7144 or bill.moore@ctps.org, or visit the Advisory Council's Web page on the Boston

Region MPO's Web site, www.bostonmpo.org.

ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE MBTA (AACT) UPDATE

At its July meeting, AACT members were briefed on recent achievements in accessibility in the transit system by the MBTA's Office for Transportation Access. Highlights included the advertisement for bids for the reconstruction of Govern-

ment Center Station, and the ongoing installation of automated fare-collection equipment.

The MBTA reported on the stop-announcement monitoring program, which aims to determine compliance with ADA requirements. The program addresses the issues of buses pulling over to the curb at bus stops, wheelchair securement, the use of ramps and lifts, and bus operator courtesy.

Additional Chapter 90 Funds Released

CITIES AND TOWNS TO RECEIVE MORE TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

Additional Chapter 90 monies, over and above the \$120 million in funding provided earlier this year, will be made available to cities and towns for upgrading roads and bridges in their communities. Of the supplemental \$55 million in statewide funding, over \$22 million will be allocated to the 101 municipi-

palities in the Boston region. Governor Romney recently announced the release of this additional funding, which is intended to expedite the completion of transportation projects before the end of the construction season.

Chapter 90 funds are made available annually to cities and towns based on a formula that takes into account population, employment, and the number of miles of local

roadways in each community.

Municipalities use these funds for transportation improvements, including, but not limited to, roadway resurfacing, sidewalk improvements and installation, right-of-way acquisition, street lighting, and other projects. Communities are reimbursed for approved construction costs as a project progresses.

Funding Program Approved

• Funding *cont. from p. 1*

New studies being conducted for the MBTA include a parking demand study on usage of MBTA park-and-ride facilities, using the results to forecast which lots will reach capacity over the next 20 years.

Another study will evaluate whether bus travel times and schedule reliability could be improved with signalization improvements on Jamaica Plain's Arborway corridor.

The new TIP document,

which contains a compilation of state and federally funded highway projects and federally funded transit projects, lists \$1.58 billion worth of projects for the Boston region in fiscal years 2007 through 2010.

Approximately \$939 million will fund transit projects and \$612 million will fund road, highway, and bridge construction and repair, and also projects focused on nonmotorized modes of transportation (such as bicycle and pedestrian projects).

Approximately \$55 million will be funded through the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program for projects that will help the region reduce pollution from vehicle emissions.

The MPO will be releasing the final UPWP and TIP documents in October, after approval by the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration. The documents will then be sent to all municipalities in the Boston region.

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