

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2105

June 21, 2011



David Mohler, Chair
Transportation Planning and Programming Committee
Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization
10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150
Boston, Ma 02116

Dear Chairman Mohler,

I write in strong support of both the Assabet River Rail Trail and the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail for inclusion on the Commonwealth's Long Range Transportation Plan.

Keeping these rail trails on the Long Range Transportation Plan will insure that the necessary funding will be allocated for these trails. Almost a decade ago, the federal government pledged more than \$1.5 million in High Priority Project funding for these two trails, thus launching a partnership with the state and local communities to build the trails. It is important that we bring this project to completion.

Many of my constituents have told me of the importance of these trails: they both terminate at commuter parking lots and will be used by many communities as part of a multi-modal transportation model. Additionally, these two rail trails advance economic development goals by providing connections to the traditional town centers of Hudson, Maynard and Marlborough.

Both trials have tremendous community and regional support. In fact, local investments and commitments exceed \$1.5 million, so it is clear that government on all levels – from local to federal – is committed to the completion of both trails.

It is therefore my hope that you will give these projects every appropriate consideration. If you have need for additional information please contact Jane Adams by phone at 978-263-1951 or by email at Jane.Adams@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely

Niki Tsongas
Member of Congress

From: [Fred Moore](#)
To: [Mike Callahan](#)
Subject: Re: Thank you for your feedback; subscription to MPO news and information e-mail service
Date: Wednesday, July 06, 2011 5:34:07 AM

Freakin Great!

I can look forward to the transportation I should have had fifty years ago
Fifty years after I am dead!

No Blue line to Lynn and a wider Route One

Thanks for nothing!

FRM

On 7/5/11 2:46 PM, "Mike Callahan" <mcallahan@ctps.org> wrote:

Thank you for providing feedback on the development of the next Long-Range Transportation Plan, *Paths to a Sustainable Region*. Your comments have been shared with the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).

Public input is an important aspect of the transportation planning process, and we appreciate your participation. Please visit www.bostonmpo.org/2035input <<http://www.bostonmpo.org/2035input>> to keep track of the development of the Plan. We expect the Plan will be available for public review and comment later this summer.

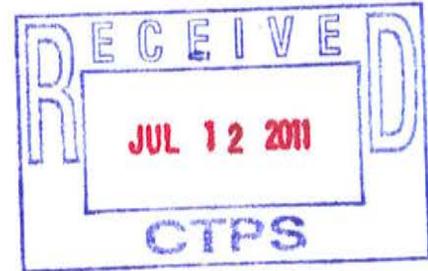
Because of the interest you have shown in regional transportation planning, we are planning to add you to our e-mail distribution list. This will allow you to keep up with transportation news and important actions taken by the MPO. Please let us know if you would not like to receive these e-mails by replying to this message.

Sincerely,

Mike Callahan
Boston Region MPO Staff
mcallahan@bostonmpo.org

July 9, 2011

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization
State Transportation Building
Ten Park Plaza, Suite 2150
Boston, MA 02116-3968



Dear Organization Members:

At your meeting on June 30th, I stood to speak at a portion of the meeting set aside for public comment. I was cut short on my statement by the Chairman, because my subject matter was the same as two prior speakers, even though I represented a neighborhood association from a different community. Throughout this meeting and others I have attended, multiple speakers have addressed like subjects, without limitations. In a time of limited transportation funds, it is important that all parties be heard in matters that may result in cost savings, or to eliminate waste in inappropriate projects. This was my intent.

In sitting through the entire meeting, I noted that when going through the line item budget, the responsible departments were asked, "What do you know about this?" Too often, the response to million dollar questions would be a shrug of the shoulders or a blank stare. In fact, in questioning the need and location for a Chelsea MBTA parking lot, the Department representative noted he had no idea where it was or its purpose. The line item went through unchanged.

Unlike the Chelsea parking lot, the item I was to speak to (the \$310 million dollar Fore River Bridge) has been well documented by myself and others, even while being denied access to important public documents. Our research came about while being denied the "transparency" spoken of in your meeting. Additionally, our proposal would rectify the imbalance in "environmental justice" that you appear to hold dearly.

Had I been given the opportunity speak, I would have said:

"The DOT is proposing a vertical lift bridge with a 250 foot channel clearance. They base this need for a wide channel on the potential needs of a yet to be designed post-Panamax ship. The dimensions have yet to be decided. However, the people in Panama have taken the initiative to make that decision. The new Panama locks are being built with a 180 foot width. A Panama Canal web site states that the proposed post-Panamax ships will require a 50 foot draft. The same site states that the only East Coast port having this channel depth is Norfolk, Virginia. Most other ports, including Boston, have a 40 foot shipping channel. The Weymouth Fore River has a depth of 35 feet, with a utility tunnel and ledge just below the mud line.

What has this got to do with the proposed \$310 million dollar vertical lift bridge? The Fore River communities have taken the position that replacing the classic bascule bridge with a 28-story erector set blight is unacceptable. If no other options were available, the communities would view this differently. However, contrary to what the DOT documentation would have you believe, a similar bascule bridge of the size necessary in the Fore River presently exists. In fact, 66 bascule bridges of this size exist in the U.S. Although the public has been denied access to the "Type Study" that the DOT utilized in make the decision between the vertical lift and bascule bridge, the communities have acquired enough data from the limited documentation to support the bascule bridge option as the best option for the communities and state. We have found that based on the DOT documents, the bascule bridge is cheaper, faster, more accommodating to the commuters and boaters, cheaper to maintain, and extremely better to look at.

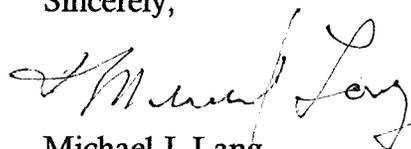
The Casco Bay Bridge in Portland, Maine has virtually the same limitations as the Weymouth Fore River Bridge. The relatively new bridge has the same traffic counts, channel depth, and 198 foot channel. However, the bridge accommodates five (5) oil storage depots while the Weymouth Fore River has one. The Casco Bay port is also the second largest oil importing port on the East Coast.

The communities of the Fore River Basin ask that the MPO support our position that the "Type Study" that the preferred option is based on be made available to the public over the Internet, to allow for public inspection to insure that the "preferred option" is the correct option for the community and state. Additionally, we ask that funding for the project be withheld until the Type Study can be reviewed to ensure that the Fore River Bridge vertical lift option does not become a fiscal embarrassment or Valdez-type catastrophe. Please consider the consequences of supporting a bridge that is being designed to accommodate a ship that has not been designed, and will not be able to pass through the shipping channel.

Thank you."

As stated, our proposal represents a \$70 million dollar savings, less traffic congestion, a community supported option, and most importantly, an honest evaluation of the bridge options. If you should want more information, please contact me at 781-843-0162 or mikejlax@hotmail.com.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Lang
East Braintree Civic Association

From: [Pat Brown](#)
To: publicinformation@bostonmpo.org
Subject: Comments on Paths to a Sustainable Region, Chapter 5
Date: Sunday, July 17, 2011 3:39:48 PM

Comments on Paths to a Sustainable Region, Chapter 5 "Livability and the Environment" July 17, 2011

I'd like to commend the excellent effort of the MPO to compile a description and an explanation of this new set of goals and visions. It's very helpful in understanding the tradeoffs and decisions made in addressing these issues. I had several specific comments on Chapter 5.

- 1) It is unclear from this document how the MPO determines when off-road bicycle and pedestrian paths function primarily as transportation facilities and when they function as recreational facilities. While a linear park may be a desirable amenity, it is not necessarily an efficient use of transportation funds. Specifically, the assumption on page 5-14 that non-motorized transportation produces no emissions is true if this constitutes more bicycling and walking for short trips. The assumption is false if it involves end-destination recreational facilities to which users drive. A model of GHG reduction which ignores the contribution of recreational drivers and assumes that all users are displacing auto use for necessary trips will overstate the effect of the facility on climate change. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities necessary to provide access to transit for travel rather than just recreation should be generally available—that is, plowed clear of snow and lit after dark. The "Development of Performance Measures" section (page 5-45) should include collecting data concerning the surrounding population density, total use, and actual transportation use of off-road bicycle and pedestrian paths both during summer and winter months to understand their effectiveness as transportation facilities. Additionally, the capital expense and the operational expense should be tracked part of the financial awareness embedded in the LRTP, allowing comparison with other transportation investments.
- 2) The discussion surrounding figure 5-16 (Transit Coverage in Relation to Population Density by Census Tract) does not indicate what constitutes transit (less expensive demand/response transit such as a Council on Aging van; moderately expensive fixed route transit such as a bus; more expensive fixed guide-way transit such as a train) nor does it indicate an appropriate level of service in relation to population density. Efficiently and effectively applying financial resources to meet the region's needs requires acknowledgement of the expense of over-supplying transit in less densely populated areas and refraining from offering transit services which are marginal or unjustified. Additionally, it would be helpful to show some easily accessible landmarks (major highways or town boundaries, for example) on this map to allow readers to locate places of interest.
- 3) In light of the MBTA commuter rail delays in the spring of 2011 and the breakdowns in bus and subway systems the following summer, there is a significant concern about loss of transit share because of deferred maintenance and the consequent (perceived and actual) unreliability of transit. Effective use of financial resources may require maintenance rather than expansion. A discussion of how the MPO determines this trade-off would be helpful.

- 4) Table 5-2 (Indicators of Livability Across Community Types) does not define what the community types are (nor did "Journey to 2030"). Additionally, it does not define "pedestrian coverage" and "bicycle coverage", nor indicate the source of the included data nor when it was collected. I'm not sure why this table is included.
- 5) "Alternative-Mode Planning and Coordination" on page 5-40 describes the work by MAPC for the Boston MPO to advance bicycle and pedestrian planning and to encourage the use of transit. However, MAPC's plans are not subject to the fiscal constraint imposed upon the MPO. Additionally, the Bay State Greenway 100 implementation by MassDOT (page 5-15)—also fiscally unconstrained—puts forth different priorities from MAPC's Regional Bicycle Plan. To increase the usefulness of plans relying upon federal transportation funding, the MPO should communicate clearly the anticipated financial constraints and measurable goals imposed by the federal process to MAPC, to the Commonwealth, and to the public through the MPO's public outreach process.

Thank you for your willingness to accept public input.

Pat Brown
Sudbury

From: scolby26@gmail.com
To: publicinformation@ctps.org
Subject: MPO Web Site Share Your Views Form
Date: Tuesday, July 19, 2011 12:21:29 AM

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
(scolby26@gmail.com) on Tuesday, July 19, 2011 at 00:23:59

subjectText: Future Transportation and BRT

messageText: I am a resident of Boston and deeply invested in the future state our of wonderful city and surrounding metropolitan area. I just finished reading the proposals for each region and have to say that I am deeply disappointed to see the continued reliance on Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) as a foundation of many of the projects. BRT has been a failure on Silver Line Phase I and I do not think it is within the best interest of the tax dollars of our residents, as well as federal tax dollars, to continue investing in a subpar transportation option. No matter where you put a bus, be it in a tunnel or in a dedicated lane, it is still a bus. Very seldom in the proposals did I see any extension of heavy or light rail service (although I would like to see the Orange Line extended through Boston neighborhoods to 128). In order to serve the best interests of riders, reliance on BRT must be abandoned, and the use of heavy and light rail options must be more readily explored. We, as a state and major city, cannot be considered world class with a reliance on buses, which will be traveling many times on already congested roadways.

Please reconsider the use of BRT in these projects. It is an embarrassing failure and severe misuse of transportation dollars.

Thank you

send_updates: yes

submitForm: Submit Query
