

MPO Meeting Minutes

Draft Memorandum for the Record

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting

December 5, 2024, Meeting

10:00 AM–12:00 PM, Zoom Video Conferencing Platform

David Mohler, Chair, representing Monica Tibbits-Nutt, Secretary of Transportation and Chief Executive Officer of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

Decisions

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) agreed to the following:

- Approve the minutes of the meeting of October 24, 2024
- Release the Disparate Impact and Disproportionate Burden (DI/DB) Policy Update for a 30-day public comment period
- Release Federal Fiscal Years (FFYs) 2025–29 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment Five for a 21-day public comment period
- Endorse FFYs 2025–29 TIP Adjustment Two
- Postpone voting to amend the FFY 2025–29 TIP to include a bundle of early action items on MassDOT’s Allston Interstate 90 Multimodal Project until the December 19, 2024, MPO board meeting to provide 14 days for the public to comment

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

See attendance starting on page 19.

2. Chair’s Report—*David Mohler, MassDOT*

There was none.

3. Executive Director’s Report—*Tegin Teich, Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff*

Tegin Teich announced that the MPO was awarded the United States Department of Transportation’s (USDOT) Prioritization Process Pilot Program Grant Award. The MPO was awarded \$1.5 million that will allow the MPO to review and update the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and TIP funding criteria.

T. Teich gave an overview of the agenda, which included three action items and two presentations.

T. Teich reminded board members of the upcoming MPO board meetings scheduled for December 19, 2024, and January 2 and 16, 2025. T. Teich stated that the January 2, 2025, MPO meeting may be cancelled due to the holidays.

4. Public Comments

Harry Mattison, Allston resident and member of the Allston I-90 Multimodal Project Task Force, asked if there would be additional opportunities for members of the public to comment after MassDOT's presentation on the Allston I-90 Multimodal Project.

David Mohler, MassDOT, responded that members of the public may make comments and ask questions after board members have made comments and asked questions.

5. Committee Chairs' Reports

Jen Rowe, City of Boston, stated that the TIP Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee will hold a meeting on December 19, 2024. J. Rowe stated that the meeting will include discussions on project readiness, approaches to project delays, and cost increases.

6. Action Item: Approval of October 24, 2024, MPO Meeting Minutes Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

1. October 24, 2024, Meeting Minutes ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

Ken Miller, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), corrected the minutes to clarify that K. Hostetter represented the Federal Transit Administration, not FHWA.

Vote

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of October 24, 2024, was made by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) (Eric Bourassa) and seconded by the Town of Brookline (Erin Chute). The motion carried. The MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (Tyler Terrasi) abstained.

7. Action Item: DI/DB Policy Update—Betsy Harvey Herzfeld, MPO Staff Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

1. DI/DB Policy Update ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

Betsy Harvey Herzfeld, MPO staff, presented updates to the MPO's Disproportionate Impact and Disproportionate Burden (DI/DB) Policy, which describes how the MPO

identifies potential disparate impacts and disproportionate burdens that may result from implementation of the projects in the LRTP.

B. Harvey Herzfeld provided background information on the DI/DB Policy and stated that it guides the MPO in determining if minority or low-income populations are disproportionately impacted by the projects in the LRTP. Projects are analyzed collectively for the entire MPO region, and the impacts analyzed include air quality, travel time, and access to destinations.

B. Harvey Herzfeld stated that identifying and addressing these impacts are required by Civil Rights regulations. The DI/DB Policy allows the MPO to comply with federal requirements while advancing the MPO's goal of a more equitable transportation system.

B. Harvey Herzfeld reviewed the updates to the DI/DB Policy, which included the following:

- A new section that describes the MPO's approach to mitigating disparate impacts and disproportionate burdens
- Revisions to reflect changes to MPO processes and practices since the policy was first endorsed
- Edits and reorganization to improve clarity
- Analysis expanded to include people with limited English proficiency

In addition, B. Harvey Herzfeld stated that federal regulations require MPOs to mitigate DIs and DBs in addition to identifying them. Mitigation involves funding TIP projects that provide benefits for the entire MPO region that counteract DIs and DBs. B. Harvey Herzfeld reviewed a proposed mitigation process, which is the most substantial change to the DI/DB Policy and may affect programming decisions for the TIP. The proposed process included the following steps:

- Mitigation occurs through the four TIPs that are developed during the four years that an LRTP is active.
- If the cumulative impact across all four TIPs would provide benefits that outweigh the DI or DB, it is considered mitigated.
- If they do not, we would address the DI or DB again in the next LRTP cycle.

B. Harvey reviewed an example of the process in a hypothetical mitigation scenario regarding changes in access to jobs. In this scenario, the low-income population would gain access to an average of 100 more jobs, and the non-low-income population would get access to 200 more jobs due to impacts from the LRTP's projects. Over the next

four years, the low-income population would need to gain at least 100 additional jobs to mitigate the difference between the low-income and non-low-income populations. In this hypothetical scenario, the change in access to jobs because of TIP projects over the following four TIP years resulted in a cumulative gain of 155 jobs, and the non-low-income population gained an average of 50 jobs, which resulted in a difference of 105 jobs, and successfully mitigated the DIs and DBs.

B. Harvey Herzfeld reviewed a potential timeline for the proposed mitigation process, which included funding TIP projects in FFYs 2025 to 2028 for mitigating impacts identified during the completion of the 2023 LRTP.

B. Harvey Herzfeld stated that staff will use project scores to indicate projects that could address DIs and DBs. B. Harvey Herzfeld stated that MPO staff are completing a study titled *Using Conveyal for TIP Project Scoring*, which proposes a new evaluation criterion that would quantify how projects might change people's ability to access destinations, which was one of the DIs that MPO staff found in the 2023 LRTP. Additional DIs and DBs identified in the 2023 LRTP included the following:

- Access to healthcare by transit
- Access to jobs by transit
- Access to parks/open space by driving
- Average travel time by driving
- Average travel time by transit

Discussion

Lenard Diggins, Regional Transportation Advisory Council, expressed support for the policy update and its improvements.

Vote

A motion to release the DI/DB Policy Update for a 30-day public comment period was made by the Advisory Council (L. Diggins) and seconded by the City of Boston (J. Rowe). The motion carried.

8. Action Item: FFYs 2025-29 TIP Amendment Five—*Ethan Lapointe, MPO Staff*

Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

1. FFYs 2025–29 TIP Amendment Five ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

Ethan Lapointe, MPO staff, presented FFYs 2025–29 TIP Amendment Five, which reallocates funding from an infrastructure purchase line item towards new revenue

vehicle acquisitions for the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA). Changes in Amendment Five are complemented by FFYs 2025–29 TIP Adjustment Two.

E. Lapointe stated that Project RTD0011124: MWRTA-5307 Formula 2025 Electric Vehicle (EV) Additional Electrification Infrastructure Cost is being removed, and funding is being reallocated to support Type D vehicle acquisition efforts in the new Project RTD0011925: MWRTA-5307 Formula 2025-Acquire Revenue Vehicles- Bus Quantity 5 Type D Gas.

Vote

A motion to release FFYs 2025–29 TIP Amendment Five for a 21-day public comment period was made by the MWRTA (T. Terrasi) and seconded by the Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) (Tom Bent). The motion carried.

9. Action Item: FFYs 2025-29 TIP Adjustment Two— *Ethan Lapointe, MPO Staff*

Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

1. FFYs 2025–29 TIP Adjustment Two ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

E. Lapointe presented FFYs 2025–29 TIP Adjustment Two, which includes a cost increase and cost decrease for two MWRTA projects in FFY 2025. E. Lapointe stated that Adjustment Two's line items are similar to those presented in Amendment Five but are small enough for an adjustment to enable endorsement before the end of the calendar year.

E. Lapointe stated that Project RTD0011110: MWRTA-Technology Support/Capital Outreach has a budget decrease, which adjusts the proportion of matching funds by the MWRTA to reflect the expected cost of the work. Project RTD0011137: MWRTA-Vehicle Replacement-Acquire Revenue Cutaways has a budget increase, which reflects anticipated acquisition costs for revenue vehicles in FFY 2025.

Vote

A motion to endorse FFYs 2025–29 TIP Adjustment Two was made by the MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the MWRTA (T. Terrasi). The motion carried.

10. Project Overview and Updates on the Allston Multimodal Project— *Susan Harrington, MassDOT*

Susan Harrington, MassDOT, presented updates on the Allston I-90 Multimodal Project. S. Harrington displayed a map demonstrating the project's locus in the Allston neighborhood and I-90.

S. Harrington gave an overview of the improvements to I-90 and the surroundings as part of the project, which included the following:

- Improved livability, connectivity, and open space
- Improved regional mobility and roadway safety
- Replacement of the aging Allston Viaduct
- Removal of the viaduct structure
- Significant transit enhancements
- New Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) parkland along the Charles River
- Enhanced bicycle and pedestrian connections

S. Harrington displayed a visualization of one of the three interchange options being evaluated. The options are addressed in the FHWA Interchange Modification Report: 3L, 3L Modified, and 3-Bridge. S. Harrington stated that the interchange is known as the project's "throat area." The design currently advancing is an at-grade alternative that was shaped through a public participation process.

S. Harrington also shared design updates related to the West Station Railyard, which will have room for eight layover spaces and a minimum of a 30-foot-wide multimodal buffer path. Above the platforms, the West Station Bus Concourse will include a new elevated roadway that will be connected to the Cambridge Street Bridge.

S. Harrington presented updates to the On-Grade Separated Paths with Shoreline alternative, which would create an elevated boardwalk structure on the Charles River. The boardwalk would be part of an at-grade alternative that accommodates Soldiers Field Road, I-90, the West Main Line, and the Grand Junction Tracks while minimizing fill in the Charles River. S. Harrington stated that the design was shaped through public participation and a working group. Aspects of the design include the following:

- Integrates the Dr. Paul Dudley White Charles River Bike Path with the shoreline
- Maintains the Soldiers Field Road historic parkway experience
- Improves DCR maintenance access
- Approximately 1,500 linear feet in length and less than one acre of fill
- Separated multimodal accessibility
- Shoreline with native plantings to provide ecological benefit

S. Harrington stated that MassDOT is striving to provide additional enhancements to bicycle, pedestrian, and accessible multimodal connectivity amenities, including the following:

- South Side Buffer Path
- Franklin Street Pedestrian Bridge
- Agganis Pedestrian Bridge

In addition, S. Harrington presented on the multimodal street network design.

S. Harrington stated that MassDOT engaged with MPO staff to conduct traffic modeling, which utilized future land use assumptions provided by MassDOT in coordination with the MAPC, the MBTA, the City of Boston, and Harvard University. S. Harrington stated that the modeling results are consistent with the MPO's LRTP. MassDOT is currently conducting post-processing of model results.

S. Harrington presented updates to the project cost and grant funding. The total project cost estimate is \$2.07 billion, including reconstruction of the Cambridge Street Bridge over I-90. The project was awarded \$335 million through the Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods grant program. In addition, the MPO approved obligation of \$10.2 million towards a base phase for design and utilities for the Cambridge Street Bridge replacement.

S. Harrington reviewed the following timeline for the project:

- Spring 2025: Interchange Modification Report Approval
- Winter 2024–Fall 2025: Review and Approval of Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Report and Draft Environmental Impact Statement
- Winter 2025–Fall 2026: Review and Approval of Environmental Impact Report and Final Environmental Impact Statement
- September 2026: Design–Build, Request for Qualifications
- Fall 2027: Design–Build, Contractor Notice to Proceed

In addition, MassDOT has discussed an approach to advance an early phase of project construction with FHWA, which includes the following potential elements:

- Early utility relocations and earthwork
- Reconstruction of Cambridge Street Bridge
- Reconstruction and realignment of the Franklin Street Pedestrian Bridge
- Reconstruction of Lincoln Street Switchback Ramp Connection to Cambridge Street
- Construction of new Lincoln Street noise barrier
- Modifications to associated rail and highway alignments and grading

These elements are contingent upon FHWA approval, and the concept will continue to be communicated publicly.

Discussion

Eric Bourassa, MAPC, asked for more information on the funding sources for the project's budget of \$2.07 billion.

David Mohler, MassDOT, responded that there are commitments for the following amounts from the specified organizations:

- City of Boston: \$100 million and an additional \$100 million of tax revenue from development
- Harvard University: \$90 million
- Boston University: \$10 million

In addition, there is a grant award for \$335 million. D. Mohler stated that the remainder will be made up of commonwealth sources, but the financial plan has not been developed yet. D. Mohler stated that additional sources may be toll and fare revenue and a federal loan program.

E. Bourassa expressed MAPC's concern about the impacts on the MBTA's ability to access maintenance and maintain robust commuter rail service during the project's construction.

D. Mohler clarified that the Grand Junction Bridge is going to be out of service during construction, which is the primary means by which southside trains get to Beacon Boston Engine Terminal, a large MBTA maintenance yard, on the north side. D. Mohler stated that this is an issue that MassDOT is working on, but there are no reports to share on the topic.

Erin Chute, Town of Brookline, asked for further information on how the early action elements fit into the design timeline.

S. Harrington stated that the early action items fit into the presented timeline, which demonstrates that early construction action would begin in late 2027 and early 2028.

E. Chute asked how long the entire project is expected to take.

S. Harrington stated that the current construction schedule is eight years.

L. Diggins asked what the alternative approach is to the phased approach.

D. Mohler stated that the alternative is that MassDOT will continue the project as a single project, and the funds will not be able to be obligated until September 2026.

L. Diggins asked if there was a cost difference between the phased and non-phased approaches.

D. Mohler asked if the phased approach would be a cost-saving approach, or if the purpose would be to move the project along in a timelier manner.

S. Harrington stated that the phased approach does not focus on the cost, rather it allows MassDOT to schedule elements of the project and obligate the funds.

Dennis Giombetti, MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham), asked about the impacts of the MBTA layover facility in the project location.

D. Mohler stated that the layover facility at Beacon Park Yards was identified as necessary; otherwise, the facility would have to be relocated somewhere else in Boston, requiring additional funding. D. Mohler acknowledged that without the layover facility, it would be much more expensive for the MBTA's West-East rail to be implemented over time.

In addition, Lynsey Heffernan, MBTA, stated that the MBTA is constrained in terms of layover space in its current system, and layover space needs continue to be an important piece of the MBTA's current and future system.

D. Giombetti asked if the layover facility impacts the "throat area" of the project.

D. Mohler stated that it will not impact the area.

D. Giombetti asked for additional information on the use of toll fares in the project's financial plan.

D. Mohler stated that toll fares are one of the funding sources submitted in the financial plan as a part of the application process. D. Mohler stated that the estimated contribution from toll fares is approximately \$20 million over ten years. D. Mohler stated that there is no plan to increase tolls, and there is no plan to bond the toll revenues.

David Koses, City of Newton, asked for clarification on MBTA changes on the Worcester commuter rail line.

L. Heffernan stated that the MBTA has been investing significantly in the Worcester Mainline to increase service reliability and frequency, and in turn invest in layover space and maintenance.

Tom Bent, Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville), asked for clarification on when the project would reach 100 percent completion.

S. Harrington stated that the schedule shows that substantial completion will be reached around 2035.

H. Mattison stated that MassDOT's proposal doubles the number of bypass tracks going through Allston and asked if MassDOT will release its analysis of why that change was made.

D. Mohler stated that a document with a full explanation of the reasoning behind that decision and the implications will be released for public comment in fall 2025.

H. Mattison asked why MassDOT is anticipating releasing the document in the fall rather than sooner.

D. Mohler asked for clarification on H. Mattison's request.

H. Mattison asked if the explanation and analysis could be sent to him after the meeting.

D. Mohler stated that the topic could be discussed at future meetings and potentially more information on the bypass tracks could be released, but that would not necessarily be the same as an analysis.

H. Mattison requested a math-based statistical analysis that led MassDOT to the decision. In addition, H. Mattison stated that the MBTA's commuter rail goals have changed dramatically in recent years.

D. Mohler stated that the changes to the regional goals for commuter rail will require more trains and more space, resulting in an expansion of the system.

H. Mattison asked if any additional analysis would be released before fall 2025.

D. Mohler stated that he does not know, and he will find out.

H. Mattison asked if MassDOT's Allston I-90 Multimodal Project working groups will be restarted.

S. Harrington responded that the working groups will be restarted.

H. Mattison asked if there are any dates set for the working groups.

S. Harrington stated that there is not a schedule yet, but there should be one by the end of the year.

Brian Kane, MBTA Advisory Board, expressed appreciation and support for keeping access for express rail from the western part of the Boston region and stated that connecting Worcester to Boston is critical.

Jay Flynn, TransitMatters, expressed that there may not be the need for this amount of extra MBTA train storage and that there is an operational benefit to the trains operating on the Worcester Line, but not at this cost. J. Flynn stated that TransitMatters identified several other possible places for MBTA storage in the Boston area. In addition, J. Flynn asked if the project cost includes maintenance facility costs on the southside.

D. Mohler stated that maintenance facility costs on the southside are not a part of the Allston I-90 Multimodal Project cost.

J. Flynn stated that maintenance facility costs on the southside would result in an additional \$500 million in costs.

D. Mohler stated that he cannot say that \$500 million is accurate, but there will be an additional cost.

Christian MilNeil, StreetsblogMass, asked about considerations for cost inflation for construction projects.

D, Mohler stated that the project cost has increased to reflect the addition of the Cambridge Street Bridge project. However, D. Mohler stated that he cannot speak to cost inflation.

C. MilNeil asked if there has been any adjustment for inflation since 2022, apart from the addition of the Cambridge Street Bridge project.

D. Mohler stated that MassDOT's costs are based on their expenditure.

Robin Chase, I-90 Task Force, asked if MassDOT has considered if I-90 needs twelve lanes.

D. Mohler stated that MassDOT has completed that analysis, which will be a part of the documentation that will be released. In addition, D. Mohler stated that traffic will increase over time, particularly in the Allston neighborhood. D. Mohler stated that one of the project's goals is to mitigate increased Allston traffic by improving commuter rail frequency and capacity.

R. Chase stated that MassDOT's goal of zero emissions by 2050 will require significant mode shift, but adding several lanes onto I-90 will facilitate increased vehicle usage in 2035, which is close to 2050.

D. Mohler stated that MassDOT is working with FHWA to inquire about separating the Cambridge Street project as an early action item to further the project's work, but MassDOT cannot do that without the MPO's support through a TIP amendment, ideally in December 2024.

J. Rowe expressed appreciation for MassDOT responding to the board's request to present updates on the project, especially at a time when many major decisions have not been made yet. J. Rowe stated that this demonstrates the board's role as a significant stakeholder in the project. In addition, J. Rowe stated that the City of Boston feels that the project is worth the \$2 billion cost and that the project addresses critical needs and benefits the Boston region. J. Rowe mentioned the following aspects of the project:

- Realignment and repair of the Massachusetts Turnpike
- Opening of space for housing and job growth
- Creation of West Station on the Worcester Mainline with future bus connections
- Creation of space for a new waterfront park by adjusting Soldier's Field Road
- Connection of a new waterfront park to West Station
- Implementation of a cohesive network of pedestrian and bicycle paths that restores environmental justice communities' access to the Charles River

J. Rowe stated that advancing these project components will allow the project to reach its promise as a regionally transformative project.

J. Rowe emphasized the importance of agencies, municipalities, and private stakeholders working together to ensure that these decisions align with their collective vision of the future.

In addition, J. Rowe stated that the City of Boston supports continuing to communicate the project's concept publicly and for stakeholders and the public to be engaged in the concept's development, particularly through the task force.

D. Mohler confirmed that the concept will continue to be developed with stakeholders in mind and through the task force.

J. Rowe proposed that the MPO board make a motion to amend the TIP and table the vote until the next board meeting in order to allow MassDOT to move forward with advancing its early action items.

D. Mohler clarified that the motion would be to amend the Cambridge Street Bridge project as an early action item for the Allston project that would be funded with \$200 million of discretionary funding and \$50 million of MassDOT funding as a match. Tabling the vote would allow time for members of the public to comment.

Vote

The City of Boston (J. Rowe) motioned to amend the FFYs 2025–29 TIP to include a bundle of early action items on MassDOT’s Allston Interstate 90 Multimodal Project and waive the 21-day public comment period. The early action items include the following:

- Early utility relocations and earthwork
- Reconstruction of Cambridge Street Bridge
- Reconstruction and realignment of the Franklin Street Pedestrian Bridge
- Reconstruction of Lincoln Street Switchback Ramp Connection to Cambridge Street
- Construction of new Lincoln Street noise barrier
- Modifications to associated rail and highway alignments and grading

MassDOT Highway Division (John Bechard) seconded the motion.

Discussion

L. Diggins expressed support for the proposition and asked if there were any additional actions MassDOT is waiting for to advance these early action items.

D. Mohler stated that MassDOT will still need federal action after this motion.

E. Bourassa asked for clarification on the funding source for the \$200 million in discretionary funding.

D. Mohler confirmed that \$200 million is a rough estimate for the funding MassDOT may receive from the Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Grant.

Vote

The City of Boston (J. Rowe) made a motion to postpone voting on the previous motion (to amend the FFYs 2025–29 TIP to include a bundle of early action items on MassDOT’s Allston Interstate 90 Multimodal Project and waive the 21-day public

comment period) until December 19, 2024, which provides 14 days for the public to give feedback. The Advisory Council (L. Diggins) seconded the motion. The motion carried.

11. Strategies for Environmental Outreach and Engagement—Stella

Jordan, MPO Staff

Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

1. Strategies for Environmental Outreach and Engagement Report ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

Stella Jordan, MPO staff, presented the Strategies for Environmental Outreach and Engagement study, which explored best practices and local preferences for environmental engagement and informed recommendations for the MPO to incorporate environmental perspectives and priorities into the transportation planning process.

S. Jordan stated that the purpose and intention of the MPO's public engagement program is to ensure that all stakeholders have opportunities to participate in the regional transportation planning process and help shape decisions with an emphasis on underrepresented communities and perspectives.

S. Jordan stated that MPO staff realized that the public engagement program needed to grow representation in the environmental space, especially considering that the MPO's work would benefit from being more tuned into the range of environmental- and resilience-focused perspectives in the Boston region.

S. Jordan stated that transportation and the environment are interconnected in many ways, such as greenhouse gas emissions, coastal flooding, and water quality. S. Jordan emphasized that engaging with stakeholders focused on environmental topics ensures that a wider range of voices are heard, which improves inclusivity of local values and environmental perspectives in the MPO's work.

The study began with an exploration of best practices, including the following:

- Academic research on climate change communications and engagement
- Peer MPO public participation plans, environmental justice plans, and studies
- USDOT and Environmental Protection Agency reports and best practices guides
- Planning association publications and best practices guides

MPO staff found information on best practices for climate communication and engagement, communication framing, and strategies for escalating stakeholder involvement. These included the following main goals:

- Create trusting relationships

- Make the work outcomes focused
- Engage local contexts

S. Jordan stated that MPO staff conducted peer interviews to understand other agencies' approaches to environmental engagement and experiences. MPO staff interviewed the Broward MPO, the North Front Range MPO, and the Chicago region's MPO. MPO staff also spoke with staff at the City of Boston and the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission. These interviews led to the following approaches:

- Vulnerability assessment
- Environmental justice plan
- Climate committee and community advisory groups

MPO staff conducted two surveys, one for municipalities and one for advocacy and community-based organizations. These surveys allowed MPO staff to better understand the priorities of environmental stakeholders in the Boston region and identify opportunities to collaborate and inform the MPO's resilience work.

Key priorities for environmental stakeholders overlapped between municipalities and environmental advocacy groups. Responses also found that effective local environmental engagement and communications strategies included framing resilience around specific local issues and using public meetings and events, and digital communications tools.

S. Jordan stated that 83 percent of respondents in both surveys indicated that they wanted to be more involved with the MPO's work as it relates to the environment. In addition, both advocates and municipalities expressed interest in participating in focus group-style discussions and attending larger events and meetings.

In addition, the survey responses demonstrated high interest across all the suggested ways of providing support for both municipalities and advocates.

MPO staff held follow-up interviews with eight municipal staff and ten representatives of advocacy and community organizations. MPO staff compensated the interviewees for their time. Several themes emerged from these follow-up interviews, such as an expressed interest in the following:

- More education about the MPO
- More spaces and opportunities for environmental stakeholders to connect and collaborate

- More collaboration between advocates and municipalities
- More support from the MPO in advancing key environmental initiatives

MPO staff sought to deepen relationships throughout this study by attending external events held by other stakeholders. Staff participated in watershed clean-up events, shared information at Open Streets events, and attended other events. Attending and participating in these events resulted in valuable opportunities for MPO staff to understand local needs and priorities.

MPO staff held an event in September 2024, which was a walking tour of the Neponset River Greenway in collaboration with the Neponset River Greenway Association. S. Jordan stated that the event was an opportunity for MPO staff to test new strategies for connecting with community members and connect directly with community members and other interested stakeholders.

S. Jordan reviewed the recommendations and next steps for MPO staff, which included the following:

- Create spaces for continued environmental engagement
 - Forums, focus groups, and events
- Disseminate information
 - Newsletter
- Operationalize best practices in environmental communication
- Continue to engage in others' work
 - Relationship building
 - Tracking and follow-through

In addition, MPO staff will use this stakeholder feedback in planning in both the Climate Resilience Program and the Engagement Program. In the Climate Resilience Program, recommendations and next steps include the following:

- Leverage relationships to guide program development
- Inform technical assistance and data analysis projects
- Ensure work benefits regional stakeholders

In the Public Engagement Program, recommendations and next steps include the following:

- Connect engagement and communication activities to local contexts and intended outcomes
- Connect engagement data to decision-making

- Ensure follow-through

S. Jordan asked board members the following discussion questions:

- What recommendations stood out to you for building on this work?
- How can staff effectively share environmental perspectives and input with you to inform future planning and policy decisions?

Discussion

L. Diggins asked how the strategies for environmental engagement are unique and differ from other types of outreach strategies.

S. Jordan responded that these strategies are broadly applicable to other types of stakeholders, and this study is a good test case that allows MPO staff to build out these strategies in other contexts. S. Jordan stated that the study emerged due to the lack of environmental voices in the MPO's public engagement and the severity of issues around climate change and resilience. The study aims to bring in more environmental perspectives, but ultimately these strategies could be applied to other cases.

J. Rowe thanked S. Jordan for engaging with City of Boston staff members and expressed appreciation for focusing on bringing environmental perspectives continuously into the MPO's work. J. Rowe asked for further information on how this work will be incorporated into the MPO's work going forward.

S. Jordan stated that some of the items mentioned are already being incorporated into the Climate Resilience Program, and MPO staff are trying to create consistent communications and spaces for environmental engagement. In addition, S. Jordan stated that MPO staff plan to not only incorporate this feedback into their program work, but also into the MPO's visions and goals.

T. Teich stated that studies such as this one have contributed to a cultural shift within the agency where discrete studies are supporting multiyear, programmatic work. This study is an example of that.

D. Mohler expressed appreciation for the study and having this topic more frequently before the board.

12. Members' Items

E. Bourassa stated that MAPC was awarded a Congestion Relief Grant by the FHWA for \$21.6 million, totaling \$27 million with the local match. E. Bourassa stated that half of

the funding is for the Bluebikes program, and the other half will go towards transit initiatives in the City of Boston.

D. Mohler stated that at the next MPO board meeting, there will be an amendment to the TIP that includes other discretionary grants and recommends incorporating the MAPC's Congestion Relief Grant award.

T. Teich suggested creating an additional amendment with its own waiver of the 21-day public comment period to follow the MPO's processes.

13. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by the MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the Advisory Council (L. Diggins). The motion carried.

Attendance

Members	Representatives and Alternates
At-Large City (City of Everett)	Eric Molinari
At-Large City (City of Newton)	David Koses Jenn Martin Ned Codd
At-Large Town (Town of Arlington)	John Alessi
At-Large Town (Town of Brookline)	Erin Chute
City of Boston	Jen Rowe Nayeli Rodriguez
Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)	Ken Miller
Federal Transit Administration (FTA)	Ari Ofsevit
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Brad Rawson Tom Bent
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)	Laura Gilmore Lynsey Heffernan Sandy Johnston
Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)	David Mohler Derek Krevat John Romano
Massachusetts Department of Transportation Highway Division	John Bechard
Massachusetts Port Authority	Sarah Lee
MBTA Advisory Board	Brian Kane Hanna Switekowski
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham)	Dennis Giombetti
MetroWest Regional Transit Authority	Tyler Terrasi
Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Acton)	Kaila Sauer Kristen Guichard
North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly)	Darlene Wynne
North Suburban Planning Council (Town of Burlington)	Melisa Tintocalis
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Lenard Diggins
SouthWest Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Wrentham)	Rachel Benson
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood)	Tom O'Rourke Steve Olanoff

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Glen Berkowitz	A Better City
Harry Mattison	Allston resident
Carl Zimba	Charles River Alliance of Boaters
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