



# BOSTON REGION METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

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The Boston Region MPO,  
the federally designated  
entity responsible for  
transportation decision-  
making for the 101 cities  
and towns in the MPO  
region, is composed of:

MassDOT Office of Planning and  
Programming  
City of Boston  
City of Newton  
City of Somerville  
Town of Bedford  
Town of Braintree  
Town of Framingham  
Town of Hopkinton  
Metropolitan Area Planning Council  
Massachusetts Bay Transportation  
Authority Advisory Board  
Massachusetts Bay Transportation  
Authority  
MassDOT Highway Division  
Massachusetts Port Authority  
Regional Transportation Advisory  
Council (nonvoting)  
Federal Highway Administration  
(nonvoting)  
Federal Transit Administration  
(nonvoting)

## MEMORANDUM

To: Transportation Planning and  
Programming Committee

December 1, 2009

From: MPO Staff

Re: Draft Plan for Development of the Boston Region MPO CMAQ  
Program

The federal fiscal years 2010–2013 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) includes in each of the four years a new item, the “CMAQ Program.” This program folds together three pre-existing programs: the Suburban Mobility Improvement, Regional Transportation Demand Management, and Improving the Region’s Bicycle/Pedestrian Infrastructure programs. It also offers new opportunities to achieve even greater CMAQ benefits by expanding the program to accommodate and invite more project types.

### BACKGROUND

The MPO has a policy of minimizing transportation-related pollution; promoting energy conservation; and advancing sustainability, environmental benefits, and health-promoting transportation options. This policy is consistent with the purpose of the federal Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) Program, which was adopted as part of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 with the intention of funding activities that reduce congestion and improve air quality.

For several years, the Boston Region MPO has programmed some of its funds for CMAQ eligible projects in three focused programs. One of these programs is the MPO’s Suburban Mobility program, which provides financial and technical support for public entities seeking to operate transit services in areas un- or underserved by the current transit network. The program has mainly funded shuttle bus services to improve accessibility to transit stations and destinations otherwise available only to people with personal transportation. Services such as the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA) Route 1 Green Line Shuttle and the Neponset Valley Railink have improved access to transit stations, while the Ipswich Essex Explorer has made transit available from the Ipswich commuter rail station to other North Shore destinations. This program has had financial support from the MPO, which

has funded it with \$650,000 per year of federal and state funds in the CMAQ funding category.

Another of the focused programs, the Transportation Demand Management program, funded under CMAQ at \$250,000 per year, for the past two years has provided financial support for several projects that contribute to mobility and air quality improvements in the region. The program has funded walking and biking maps for WalkBoston and the City of Boston. Funds have also been allocated to the North Shore Transportation Management Association (TMA) to offer transportation incentives to commuters to reduce single-occupancy travel.

The MPO has also funded a bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure program at a level of approximately \$650,000 per year for the past two years.

For the past four years an average yearly total of approximately \$12 million of CMAQ funding has been used for intersection improvement projects and transit projects required as part of the State Implementation Plan, and separate from these three focused programs.

By modifying the requirements for the federal fiscal year 2010 CMAQ Program to accommodate more project types, the MPO is seeking a wider range of applicants and projects to achieve even greater CMAQ benefits.

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE NEW PROGRAM**

### **Intent and Purpose**

For the 2010 federal fiscal year, the MPO has combined all initiatives under one line item, the CMAQ Program, and has provided \$2 million for it. The program will be open to all projects that are eligible for funding under the federal CMAQ guidelines.

The MPO has the following intentions for the program: that it will – (1) continue to support new transit services in areas un- or underserved by the existing transit system, (2) be a funding source for implementing small-scale roadway, intersection, bicycle, or pedestrian facility recommendations from evaluations and studies conducted by the MPO, and (3) stimulate thinking about and developing a broader range of proposals (including transportation demand management initiatives, fleet upgrades, and diesel retrofits) from public entities in the region that will result in expanding the variety and scope of investments supported by funds in this program. The purpose of this new approach is to improve the effectiveness of CMAQ funds in reducing emissions and congestion in the region. Positive overall air quality impacts will be a prime consideration in project selection.

### **Program Overview**

This broader-scope CMAQ Program has several effects: (1) the solicitation for projects can be opened to all types of projects eligible for CMAQ funding, some of which have not yet been actively encouraged by the MPO, that might result in additional and possibly more effective activities; (2) the MPO can conduct one solicitation for all CMAQ-eligible projects and

programs; and (3) it can direct funds to any project in the formerly funded three programs without regard to former program funding limitations by category.

Regional transit authorities (RTAs) in the MPO region, municipalities, transportation management associations, chambers of commerce, and nonprofit and not-for-profit transportation advocacy groups will be invited to submit proposals. All projects must have either an RTA, a municipality, or a transportation agency as a fiduciary agent as an integral part of the proposal.

The following items are examples of the types of projects the MPO will include in its solicitation for projects. The program, in line with CMAQ guidance from the Federal Highway Administration, will make capital investments and/or provide operating assistance in projects and programs such as:

- Diesel engine retrofits (non-transit vehicles)
- “Costs-above” fleet replacement with upgrades to hybrid vehicles
- Congestion relief measures (intersection and roadway improvements that improve traffic flow or bicycle or pedestrian infrastructure that will enable increased use of these modes)
- Infrastructure investments for bicycle and pedestrian facilities (bike lanes, sidewalks, signs, curb ramps, signals, crosswalks, crosswalk technology, and other equipment with a similar purpose)
- Access to transit improvements
- Transit vehicles
- Marketing and promotion of transit, bicycle, and pedestrian modes
- Bicycle parking infrastructure
- Parking-demand management programs
- Access management programs
- New transit services (in suburban areas, according to past practice in the MPO’s Suburban Mobility Program)
- Intermodal facilities
- Travel demand strategies
- Incident management programs
- Traffic operation centers
- Ridesharing (supplementing, not duplicating MassRIDES services)

Planning studies are not eligible for funding and cannot be considered part of the project’s local match. Another parameter is that the project cannot be an existing service. Finally, if the

project is a fixed route service, it must be ADA compliant if paratransit service is not already provided in its service area.

### **Selection Criteria**

To be selected for funding in the MPO CMAQ Program, a project must meet the criteria of the Statewide CMAQ Committee and must either reduce vehicle emissions or, for activities promoting non-automobile modes, must not increase emissions in the region. Other considerations will include: contribution to mobility and sustainability; cost-effectiveness; population served; and whether the projects (likely to be funded) as a group provide modal and geographic equity. (An application for funding for years two and three will require cost-benefit reports.)

### **Funding**

Capital projects will be required to have a 20 percent local match each year for up to three years of funding (the limit of eligibility for the MPO CMAQ Program). Operating programs will be required to have a 20, 30, or 40 percent match for years one through three, respectively.

### **Public Education and Outreach**

To support the CMAQ Program, the MPO will initiate a robust public education process coordinated with the solicitation for projects in the program. Staff will prepare a packet of information (including a description of the federal CMAQ Program, a discussion of the MPO policies related to air quality, and details and specifics of the MPO CMAQ Program) for distribution to all the entities eligible to propose projects in the program. This information will also be posted on the MPO's website, reported in *TRANSREPORT*, and used as a meeting handout at the MPO's January 2010 Open House. Staff and MPO members will conduct up to six CMAQ Program How-To Seminars during the project-solicitation time frame to provide general information to the public about the program and technical assistance to potential project proponents. The MPO may also wish to hold a preproposal meeting to allow staff to discuss the details of the program with proponents who are intending to submit a proposal.

Staff will prepare the following public information and outreach materials:

- Program description
- Application (online)
- List of entities to be included in the solicitation
- Solicitation cover letter
- Schedule
- FAQ
- Press release

- TRANSREPORT article
- Website posting

## NEXT STEPS FOR THE PROGRAM

The Transportation Planning and Programming Committee is scheduled to consider the program at the December 3 meeting and possibly decide at the December 17 meeting.

Once the new CMAQ Program has been approved by the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee, staff recommend the following schedule for implementation:

- Finalize program informational and application materials (December and January)
- Solicit proposals (January 15)
- Conduct How-To's (February and March), coordinated with TIP How-To Seminars
- Hold preproposal meeting (March 15)
- Proposals Due (April 1)
- Review proposals and provide technical review and assistance (April 1 through May 15)
- Meetings with Subcommittee (April 15 through May 15):
  - Review proposals: members and staff review proposals and generate questions for additional information (April 15)
  - Hold Proponent Input Day for Subcommittee (May 1)
  - Review proponent responses to questions and requests (May 8)
  - Decide on projects to recommend to TPPC (May 15)
  - TPPC decides on projects for TIP (May 15)
  - TPPC submits projects to Statewide CMAQ Eligibility Committee (May or June)
  - The Office of Transportation Planning will administer contracts
- Staff review quarterly reports and report on project activities and results.

KQ/PW/pw