

# BOSTON MPO TRANSIT MODERNIZATION PROGRAM UPDATE

## Description

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) created a Transit Modernization Investment program as part of its *Destination 2040* Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The MPO allocated five percent of its Regional Target funds to this program between 2025 and 2040, or approximately \$30 to \$50 million in each five-year time band. This investment program will fund transit maintenance and modernization projects identified through coordination with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA), the Cape Ann Transit Authority (CATA), and Boston region municipalities. By investing in these transit modernization and investment projects, the MPO will help to improve transit service in the region, and work toward the goals established in *Destination 2040*.

## Types of Eligible Projects

The program would allow the MPO to fund the types of projects included below. MPO staff identified these project types, along with specific projects suggestions, after discussions with the MBTA, MWRTA, and CATA, and by reviewing comments on the MBTA's *Focus40* plan. Staff also reviewed feedback collected during MPO outreach to learn what types of projects the public would like to see funded through this investment program. The MPO goals that would be addressed by these investments are included under each project type.

- 1. Accessibility improvements:** These projects would help achieve the MPO's Transportation Equity goal and would support the accessibility goals included in the MBTA's *Plan for Accessible Transit Infrastructure*. Potential projects could include:
  - Constructing or replacing redundant elevators at MBTA rapid transit or commuter rail stations
  - Installing high-level platforms at inaccessible stations
  - Removing barriers to accessibility at commuter rail and rapid transit stations, and MBTA and regional transit authority (RTA) bus stops
  - Providing signage to incorporate universal symbols and graphics for all populations, including the visually impaired

Specific projects identified during public outreach include improving wheelchair access across the commuter rail tracks at Quincy Center Station, and providing a direct path to access the parking lot at Southborough Station on the Framingham/Worcester commuter rail line.

**2. Station modernization improvements:** These projects would help achieve the MPO's Transportation Equity and System Preservation and Modernization goals. Potential projects could include:

- Improving station platforms
- Making enhancements at existing rapid transit and commuter rail stations, such as lighting improvements and the repair of staircases
- Improving customer amenities. The following projects were suggested during public outreach:
  - Providing more indoor seating at South Station and Lechmere Station
  - Building a weather protected waiting area at Norwood Central commuter rail station and Haymarket Station
  - Providing or improving bus shelters along RTA routes
- Improving the front entrance of the MWRTA Blandin Hub facility
- Improving signage for customers

**3. Parking improvements at stations:** These projects would help achieve the MPO's Capacity Management and Mobility goal and support first- and last-mile access to transit. Eligible projects could include upgrades at existing parking facilities, or new or expanded parking facilities to improve access to MBTA stations. This funding could also supplement funding in the Community Connections program. Specific projects identified during public outreach include increasing covered bicycle parking at Alewife Station, and providing electric car chargers at Quincy Center Station.

**4. Infrastructure state of good repair projects:** These projects would help achieve the MPO's System Preservation and Modernization goal. Specific projects could include enhancing the climate resiliency of transit assets, and improving RTA facilities.

While MPO staff have discussed the feasibility of supporting track, signal, and power systems with the MBTA, staff will request MPO feedback on whether they would like to support this type of project as part of this program.

**5. Fleet modernization:** These projects would help achieve the MPO's System Preservation and Modernization and Clean Air and Sustainable Community goals. Eligible projects could include replacing RTA and MBTA buses and Silver Line fleets to achieve a mix of hybrid and battery electric vehicles; replacing single-level commuter rail coaches with higher capacity bi-level coaches; and various other upgrades and overhauls to improve service reliability.

**6. Bus maintenance facilities upgrades:** These projects would help the MPO achieve its System Preservation and Modernization goal. Projects funded in this

category could include upgrading or replacing bus maintenance facilities to improve state of good repair, support additional capacity, and accommodate future fleets. Specific projects identified during public outreach include adding solar panels to the MWRTA storage building and at the East Street property.

MPO staff continue to welcome input on the types of projects to be funded under this program. Staff will use this information to formalize a project intake process, and to develop evaluation criteria for selecting projects when funding becomes available in the Transportation Improvement Program in federal fiscal year 2025.