

# **MPO Meeting Minutes**

## **Memorandum for the Record**

### **Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting**

#### **February 27, 2020 Meeting**

10:00 AM–12:40 PM, State Transportation Building, Transportation Board Room, 2nd Floor, 10 Park Plaza, Boston

David Mohler, Chair, representing Stephanie Pollack, Secretary, and Chief Executive Officer, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

#### **Decisions**

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

- Approve the minutes of the meeting of January 9, 2020
- Approve the minutes of the meeting of January 23, 2020
- Approve Amendment Two to the federal fiscal year (FFY) 2020–24 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

#### **Meeting Agenda**

##### **1. Introductions**

See attendance beginning page 20

##### **2. Public Comments**

Marzie Galazka and Peter Spellios (Director of Community and Economic Development and Chair of the Board of Selectmen, Town of Swampscott) advocated for the inclusion of TIP project #610666 (Rail Trail Construction in Swampscott) in the FFYs 2021–25 TIP. M. Galazka stated that this is the first time Swampscott has sought MPO funds for a project. M. Galazka added that this project would convert disused rail right-of-way into a multiuse bicycle and pedestrian pathway connecting the Northern Strand Trail to the Marblehead Trail. M. Galazka stated that the citizens of Swampscott approved an \$850,000 allocation for engineering and design in 2017. Swampscott has hired Stantec to complete the design. M. Galazka stated that the town has met with the right-of-way division at MassDOT regarding necessary acquisitions and with the local conservation commission to file a notice of intent, because the project is near local wetlands. P. Spellios stated that the project has the support of the Swampscott select and planning boards, conservation commission, finance and capital improvements committees, and a town meeting referendum with over 60 percent support of residents. P. Spellios stated

that the trail would connect to several elementary schools as well as Swampscott High School and is an important project for Swampscott two reasons: the lack of safe pedestrian accommodations in such a densely populated municipality, and the need to provide connections to an increasingly socioeconomically diverse community.

Chase Berkeley (Director of Public Works, Town of Milton), John Thompson (Town Engineer, Town of Milton), and Greg Lucas (BETA, Inc.) advocated for the inclusion of TIP project #608955 (Intersection Improvements at Squantum Street at Adams Street in Milton) in the FFYs 2021–25 TIP. C. Berkeley stated that the town views this project similar to a corridor improvement project because of its close proximity to Interstate 93 (I-93) Exit 10 and the congestion that occurs when commuters exit the highway and travel through the intersection. C. Berkeley thanked Matt Genova (MPO staff) for his assistance in explaining the MPO's evaluation criteria. C. Berkeley noted that the intersection currently has no pedestrian or bicyclist accommodations, and this project represents an opportunity to create those. C. Berkeley thanked the MPO for its consideration.

Ben Cares (Infrastructure Planner, City of Chelsea) advocated for the inclusion of TIP project #609532 (Targeted Safety Improvements and Related Work on Broadway, from Williams Street to City Hall Avenue in Chelsea) in the FFYs 2021–25 TIP. B. Cares stated that the highest priority of this project is pedestrian safety. The intersection of Broadway and Third Street is one of MassDOT's top 200 crash locations in the state. B. Cares stated that this project would reduce the roadway to one lane of vehicular traffic with a combined bus and bicycle lane. The City of Chelsea plans to launch a pilot bus lane in collaboration with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) in late summer and fall 2020, which would allow for preferential movement for the 111, 116, 117, and 112 bus routes. Route 111 is one of the most heavily used routes in the MBTA system. B. Cares stated that as part of the city's Complete Streets program, they are looking to install two new Blue Bikes bikeshare stations in the project area. B. Cares added that the project would resignalize all the intersections in the project area, which may address some of the congestion that may be perceived as a result of losing a lane of vehicular traffic. B. Cares stressed that this project would provide needed safety and economic vitality improvements in the heart of downtown Chelsea, a largely low- and moderate-income community with many small businesses.

Jaklyn Centracchio and Greg Lucas (BETA Group, Inc., on behalf of the Town of Westwood) advocated for the inclusion of TIP project #608947 (Traffic Signal Improvements on Route 109 in Westwood) in the FFYs 2021–25 TIP. J. Centracchio stated that this project consists of seven signalized intersections along a 1.4-mile corridor. J. Centracchio added that this project would have regional benefits, improving

operations and congestion on Route 109 with the introduction of a full adaptive signal control system. J. Centracchio stated that the anticipated cost of construction is \$710,000. J. Centracchio stated that there is a long history of projects aimed at addressing congestion on this corridor, which is caused not only by Westwood residents but by regional traffic. Medfield, Dover, Walpole, and Millis also contribute to and experience congestion on this corridor as traffic travels from Route 109 to Route 128. J. Centracchio stated that congestion on Route 109 has created excessive cut through traffic issues in abutting neighborhoods of Westwood, creating the need for many additional traffic calming projects within the municipality. J. Centracchio stated that the project will be ready for advertisement in the summer of 2020 and has no right-of-way impacts.

James Kupfer (Town Planner, Town of Bellingham) provided an update on TIP project #608887 (Rehabilitation and Related Work on Route 126, from Douglas Drive to Route 140 in Bellingham). This project is currently programmed with MPO regional target funds in FFY 2022. J. Kupfer stated that this project remains on schedule. The town submitted 75 percent design plans to MassDOT in November 2019, anticipates comments soon, and is ready to submit 100 percent design plans by June 2020. J. Kupfer stated that funding for engineering services is fully procured for the completion of the project. J. Kupfer stated that the town would be happy for the project to move into FFY 2021 if the opportunity arises.

Herb Nolan (Solomon Foundation) noted that several of the bicycle and pedestrian projects eligible for funding in the FFYs 2021–25 TIP (project numbers 610544 [Peabody Multiuse Path Construction of Independence Greenway at I-95 and Route 1 in Peabody] and 610666 [Rail Trail Construction in Swampscott]) are those that the Solomon Foundation has supported, and expressed support for their advancement. H. Nolan advocated for the inclusion of project #610674 (Reconstruction of Commonwealth Avenue [Route 30], from East of Auburn Street to Ash Street in Newton) in the FFYs 2021–25 TIP, stating that this project represents a piece of a larger greenway system that Newton and partners have been advancing for many years. H. Nolan stated that this segment of Commonwealth Avenue would connect the Blue Heron Trail with downtown Boston and a network of other trails and bicycle paths being pursued in the region.

Brad Rawson (Director of Mobility, City of Somerville) advocated for the inclusion of a slate of projects in the Inner Core Committee subregion in the FFYs 2021–25 TIP, including projects in Belmont, Newton, Chelsea, Milton, Somerville, and Lynn. B. Rawson stressed the regional importance of project #609532 in Chelsea, commending the city's leadership on bus priority. B. Rawson noted that he recently met with Mayor

McGee's team in Lynn, and commended them for their work to bring equity and mobility to the North Shore with project #609246 (Reconstruction of Western Avenue [Route 107] in Lynn). B. Rawson stated that project #610674 in Newton is a visionary project that would reclaim road space and promote low carbon forms of mobility in the region. B. Rawson also advocated for project #607981 (McGrath Boulevard Project in Somerville), stating that this is a project of regional importance for a range of stakeholders including MassDOT. B. Rawson also commended staff for their work on revising TIP scoring criteria.

### **3. Chair's Report—*David Mohler, MassDOT***

D. Mohler stated that in addition to being the chair of the MPO board, he is also the trustee of the Green Line Extension local community trusts. D. Mohler acknowledged for the record that the first withdrawals from the Cambridge and Somerville trusts would be made this month, and thanked both municipalities for their contributions to the project.

### **4. Committee Chairs' Reports**

There were none.

### **5. Regional Transportation Advisory Council Report—*Lenard Diggins, Chair, Regional Transportation Advisory Council (Advisory Council)***

L. Diggins reported that Josh Ostroff (Transportation for Massachusetts) and Sandy Johnston (MPO staff) presented at the Advisory Council's February meeting. S. Johnston led a discussion of the scoring criteria for the MPO's new Community Connections first- and last-mile funding program. L. Diggins noted that the Advisory Council appreciates being given early information regarding the progress of MPO programs and projects.

### **6. Executive Director's Report—*Tegin Teich, Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff***

T. Teich introduced Marty Milkovits, recently hired as Associate Director of Regional Modeling and Analysis at MPO staff, and reported that the MPO staff has also hired a new Manager of Certification Activities and MPO Support, Jonathan Church.

T. Teich highlighted an external outreach event that MPO staff participated in during February. The event was a Transportation and Climate forum hosted by Metropolitan Area Planning Council's (MAPC) Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination subregional group. T. Teich stated that the focus of the event was on reducing emission, particularly via the electrification of municipal fleets, and noted overlap with attendees of the MPO's Transit Working Group.

T. Teich noted the critical importance of the recurring bottleneck study being presented under item nine on this agenda, noting that these studies provide low-cost solutions to regional congestion without significantly expanding the capacity of the transportation network.

**7. Action Item: Approval of January 9, 2020, and January 23, 2020, MPO Meeting Minutes—Róisín Foley and Kate White, MPO Staff**

***Vote***

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of January 9, 2020, was made by MAPC (Eric Bourassa) and seconded by the SouthWest Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway) (Glenn Trindade). The North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn) (Tina Cassidy) abstained. The motion carried.

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of January 23, 2020, was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by At-Large Town (Town of Arlington) (Daniel Amstutz). The motion carried.

**8. Action Item: FFYs 2020-24 TIP Amendment Two, Final Approval—Matt Genova, MPO staff**

***Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar***

1. [FFYs 2020–24 TIP Amendment Two Simplified and Full Tables](#)

M. Genova presented Amendment Two of the FFYs 2020–24 TIP for final approval. This amendment was initially presented at the MPO meeting on January 23, 2020, and released for a 21-day public review period. MPO staff received one public comment regarding Amendment Two. Robert Campbell, Town Engineer in the Town of Braintree, wrote to express support for Amendment Two as Braintree’s TIP contact.

All of the projects included in Amendment Two are in the FFY 2020 transit portion of the TIP, and are being supported by non-Regional Target funding sources. Amendment Two documents the awarding of Federal Community Transit Grant Program funds and Mobility Assistance Program grants to organizations and public agencies that serve older adults and people with disabilities. Both programs are administered by MassDOT. The projects listed in this amendment are separate from the MPO’s Community Connections and MassDOT’s Workforce Transportation Program.

***Vote***

A motion to approve Amendment Two to the FFYs 2020–24 TIP was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the SouthWest Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway) (G. Trindade). The motion carried.

## 9. FFY 2019 Low-Cost Improvements to Express-Highway Bottleneck Locations—*Seth Asante and Chen-Yuan Wang, MPO staff*

### *Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar*

#### 1. [Low-Cost Improvements to Express-Highway Bottleneck Locations](#)

S. Asante and C. Wang presented the findings of this recurring study that recommends low-cost solutions to express-highway bottleneck locations in the Boston MPO region. Many of the recommendations from past iterations of this study have been constructed. The study process starts with an inventory of candidate locations, where MPO staff consult with MassDOT Highway Division staff and review Congestion Management Process monitoring data. Once study locations are selected, staff collect traffic and crash data to assess the existing conditions, develop and evaluate low-cost improvements, obtain feedback from the MassDOT Highway Division, and produce a final report. In FFY 2019, MPO staff studied I-93 northbound between Exit 40 and 41 in Wilmington and I-93 southbound at the HOV Zipper Lane exit in Quincy and Braintree.

#### ***I-93 northbound between Exit 40 and 41 in Wilmington***

The impact of this bottleneck includes a high-crash rate, reduction of travel speeds, and undesirable levels of service. The study found that there is a downstream lane-drop location significantly more congested than the study location, making it clear that congestion at the study location from Exit 40 to Exit 41 is part of a larger issue further downstream that needs additional study. Based on the findings, staff propose to use the existing shoulder between the two exits to create an auxiliary lane, as a low-cost improvement measure, and further study the downstream bottleneck.

#### ***I-93 southbound at the high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) zipper lane exit in Quincy and Braintree***

At this location, traffic from six lanes is forced into four travel lanes in a short segment. In addition, a high number of lane-changing maneuvers take place within the segment. These factors, the close proximity of the merge and diverge areas, and slow travel speeds create significant congestion. Staff proposed two alternatives to address the bottleneck. The preferred alternative, Alternative 1, would move the HOV exit about 600 feet north to lengthen the distance in which HOV traffic merges with the mainline traffic. The extension is expected to provide HOV lane drivers with ample distance for merging and weaving safely and comfortably.

The study aligns with the MPO goal of improving capacity management and mobility on the region's highway system, and provides the MassDOT Highway Division with low-cost improvement concepts to address bottlenecks. If implemented, these low-cost,

short-term improvements would reduce congestion at the bottlenecks. The next steps are for MassDOT Highway Division to advance the concepts into projects.

### ***Discussion***

D. Amstutz asked about the tradeoffs inherent in converting a breakdown lane to an auxiliary lane at the first location. C. Wang replied that it depends on the distance available for weaving traffic, and the size of the shoulder at the location in question. S. Asante added that when you have a short distance between an on-ramp and an exit ramp, usually it is better to provide a continuous auxiliary lane. D. Amstutz asked whether the two alternatives suggested for the second study location are mutually exclusive. S. Asante replied that they are not mutually exclusive, but the first alternative makes more sense under the current conditions. The report includes a third alternative that combines both.

Jennifer Berardi-Constable (South Shore Coalition) (Town of Rockland) asked why the second study location only studied the southbound corridor of this roadway, indicating that the northbound location is also quite congested. S. Asante stated that limited amount of funds are available for this study, but acknowledged that the northbound lane is also an issue.

T. Teich added that the idea of the change to the HOV lane at the second study location is to lengthen the merging distance and shorten the HOV lane, which improves congestion as drivers merge onto the highway.

L. Diggins asked how adding an additional lane at the first location reduces the congestion. C. Wang responded that adding the lane creates more space for more cars to merge and diverge, reducing congestion.

Steve Olanoff (Three Rivers Interlocal Council [Town of Norwood/Neponset River Regional Chamber] Alternate) noted that quite a few auxiliary lanes were added as part of the Route 128 add-a-lane project and are working quite well. S. Olanoff added that usually the improvements suggested by these studies are low cost, such as painting or restriping, but that the improvements at the second location include removing a piece of concrete median, which can be expensive. S. Olanoff added that on the northbound side, conditions could be improved by extending the on-ramp where traffic enters the northbound zipper lane. S. Asante replied that the estimated costs are in the report, between \$300,000 and \$500,000.

## 10. FFYs 2021-25 TIP Development—*Matt Genova and Sandy Johnston, MPO staff*

### *Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar*

1. [FFYs 2021–25 TIP Development: Project Evaluation Results](#)
2. [FFYs 2020–24 TIP: Programmed Regional Target Projects](#)
3. [FFYs 2021–25 TIP: Descriptions of Evaluated Projects, Grouped by MPO Investment Category](#)
4. [Presentation: FFYs 2021–25 TIP and Community Connections Project Evaluation Results](#)

M. Genova presented evaluation scores for projects eligible for funding with MPO regional target funds in the FFYs 2021–25 TIP. MPO staff plan to present readiness updated for currently funded projects and scenarios for programming new projects in March. The MPO will discuss these options and decide on a draft list to release for public review in April. The MPO would then endorse the final FFYs 2021–25 TIP in May.

The evaluation process for each TIP begins in November with the collection of data from project proponents and ends with the presentation of scores in February. The 17 projects evaluated this year fall into the following MPO investment categories: three bicycle and pedestrian projects, four intersection improvements, six complete streets projects, and four major infrastructure projects. Fourteen of these projects were evaluated for the first time this year, and three are returning. M. Genova noted that the MPO's current Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), *Destination 2040*, set the following goals for the amount of funding allocated to each MPO investment program in each TIP:

- Complete Streets—45 percent
- Intersection Improvements—13 percent
- Bicycle and Pedestrian—5 percent
- Community Connections—2 percent
- Transit Modernization—5 percent
- Major Infrastructure—30 percent

M. Genova stated that a plurality of projects scored between 51 and 60 points. The highest scoring project totaled 83 points, while the lowest scoring project scored 31. The average score of projects was 55.4 points out of 134. Scores in the top quartile of projects evaluated in FFY 2020 are highlighted in green on the [evaluation sheet](#) posted to the MPO meeting calendar.



Sheila Page (At-Large Town) (Town of Lexington) asked whether the average score this year is noteworthy. M. Genova replied that on average this year's projects are slightly higher scoring than in previous years.

Nicole Freedman (At-Large City) (City of Newton) asked whether the MPO has considered adopting evaluation measures for cost-effectiveness. M. Genova replied that the MPO is currently undertaking a criteria revision process, which includes exploring cost-effectiveness measures. Any revisions will be applied to projects evaluated in the development of the FFYs 2022–26 TIP.

M. Genova reviewed the Bicycle and Pedestrian projects evaluated for the first time this year.

***#610544: Independence Greenway in Peabody***

This project is a 12-foot wide, 1.8-mile multiuse path connecting two existing sections of the Independence Greenway as well as the Border to Boston Trail. This project includes both off-street and street-adjacent segments, as well as an underpass under I-95 and a bridge over Route 1. Of note, last year the MPO elected to fund another segment of the Independence Greenway east of this project, which is anticipated to be advertised for construction in 2024. This is the highest scoring bike/ped project with a total of 53 points.

***#609204: Belmont Community Path***

This project is a 16-foot wide paved path connecting the existing Fitchburg Cutoff path, which connects to the Alewife Red Line station, to Belmont Center and the commuter rail station. This project runs adjacent to Belmont High School and the Fitchburg commuter rail line and includes an underpass under the active railroad tracks at Alexander Avenue. This project represents phase 1 of 2 for the Belmont portion of the Mass Central Rail Trail. A second phase of this project is anticipated to connect further west to the Massachusetts Central Rail Trail in Waltham. This project has a total score of 42 points.

***#610666: Rail Trail Construction in Swampscott***

This project is a 10-foot wide, 2.1-mile long multi-use trail connecting the existing Marblehead Rail Trail to the Swampscott commuter rail station. This trail represents Swampscott's portion of the East Coast Greenway, which is an effort to create a 3,000-mile greenway running from Florida to Maine. The trail will make use of existing railroad abutments to create a bridge over Route 1A and the Town will host trail amenities including parking and bathrooms at Swampscott Middle School. This project has a total score of 34 points. M. Genova displayed two maps showing the proposed rail trail location, which were provided by the project proponent.

***Discussion***

Jay Monty (At-Large City) (City of Everett) noted that the low scores of these projects demonstrate the need for criteria revisions because the current evaluation system applies scoring designed for highway projects to bicycle and pedestrian improvements.

D. Amstutz and Jim Fitzgerald (City of Boston) (Boston Planning and Development Agency) noted that it would be helpful to see more maps that illustrate the connections between these projects and existing facilities or other planned bicycle and pedestrian improvements.

Brian Kane (MBTA Advisory Board) asked about the larger context for these projects. D. Mohler clarified that the MPO has fully programmed its available regional target funding in FFYs 2020–24, which means that any new projects the MPO is able to fund are likely to be in FFY 25 of the 2021–25 TIP. Depending on cost changes and readiness considerations with currently programmed projects, the MPO has about \$107 million to program in 2025. Given the money available, the MPO must decide which of the projects presented today can be funded.

D. Mohler noted that the cost estimates for the three bicycle and pedestrian projects vary widely relative to their length. M. Genova replied that his understanding is that the main reason the estimate for the Belmont project is so high is because it includes an underpass. D. Mohler noted that the project map indicates the proposed trail is in the current right-of-way for the Fitchburg commuter rail line, and asked if the project proponents have coordinated with the MBTA. Vincent Stanton (Belmont Community Path Project Committee) stated that the MBTA owns 40 feet north of the westbound track and the Belmont Citizens forum owns 30 feet beyond that, which used to be part of the Massachusetts Central Railroad right-of-way. It is not yet clear whether the path will be entirely on the MBTA or Citizens forum parcels.

D. Amstutz noted that the width of the path is generous for a multiuse path and the cost could perhaps be reduced by reducing the size.

N. Freedman noted that there is approximately \$500 million worth of projects vying for funding and only \$107 million available and asked whether this is a normal ratio. M. Genova replied that it is common for the MPO to have many more projects asking for funding than funding available, but added that some projects are eligible for splitting construction costs over multiple years.

D. Amstutz added that it would be helpful to see the total requests in each investment program compared with the funding available.

M. Genova reviewed the Complete Streets projects evaluated this year.

***#609532: Targeted Safety Improvements and Related Work on Broadway in Chelsea***

This project will reconstruct a half-mile section of lower Broadway, including widening sidewalks, improving signals, and enhancing streetscaping. The primary focus of this project is enhancing economic activity along the corridor by addressing the existing multimodal Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) clusters in the area, which limit the ability of those walking or biking to safely access destinations in downtown Chelsea. This project will implement either dedicated bike facilities or a dedicated bus/bike lane to improve multimodal access along the corridor, recognizing that this is a high-ridership segment of several MBTA bus routes. The project will also upgrade signals to improve emergency vehicle and bus movement through the area. This is the highest scoring overall project with 83 points, and scores at or near the top in Safety, System Preservation, Equity, and Economic Vitality.

***#610662: Roadway and Intersection Improvements at Woburn Common***

This project involves the reconstruction of several roadways around Woburn Common to address safety and circulation issues in the City center. This project will create dedicated bike facilities throughout the project area where none exist today and will fully reconstruct the existing sidewalks in Woburn Center to bring them into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This project also aims to clarify vehicular turning movements and circulation patterns to decrease congestion and improve conditions for personal vehicles, trucks, and buses. This project is one of the highest scoring overall with a tally of 75, and scores particularly well in Safety, Capacity Management and Mobility, and Clean Air and Sustainable Communities.

***#609437: Boston Street Improvements in Salem***

This project aims to improve safety at two high-crash locations at Bridge Street and Essex Street through the reconstruction of the roadway and the modernization of the corridor's signals. The project will create new off-street bicycle facilities that span the length of the corridor and will bring existing sidewalks, ramps, and bus stops into ADA compliance while addressing the existing poor condition of the roadway pavement. This project scores especially well in System Preservation, Equity, and Economic Vitality and has an overall score of 69.

***#609437: Reconstruction on Route 30 in Weston***

This project will reconstruct the roadway to create a corridor that better serves all users. The project includes geometric modifications and the modernization of signals to improve traffic flow and safety. The project also includes the construction of a 10-foot shared-use path along the 3.7-mile length of the corridor, creating bike facilities where none exist today and improving conditions for pedestrians. Of note, this project aims to connect its multimodal facilities with those being proposed on Route 30 in Newton, a

project that we also scored this year. This project scores particularly well in both Capacity Management and Mobility as well as Clean Air and Sustainable Communities and has an overall score of 57.

***#610544: Reconstruction of Commonwealth Avenue (Route 30) in Newton***

This project aims to create safe and attractive bicycle and pedestrian facilities within six-tenths of a mile on the current right-of-way of the existing carriageway on Route 30 to improve the City of Newton's connectivity to local greenspace and trails. In addition to converting the carriageway into an off-street path, the project will improve safety along the corridor by reconstructing the ramps, crosswalks, and signals at the intersection with Ash Street and will install flashing beacons at mid-block crossings at three MBTA bus stops along the corridor. As mentioned earlier, this project is part two of a broader vision for the creation of dedicated off-street pedestrian and bicycle facilities along the Route 30 corridor between Newton and Weston. This project scores particularly well in System Preservation and Modernization and has an overall score of 51.

***#610671: Bridge Replacement, Central Street over Saw Mill Brook in Manchester-by-the-Sea***

This project aims to reconstruct the deteriorating bridge that carries Route 127 over Saw Mill Brook in downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea. Though this project will only reconstruct 225 feet of Central Street, this project preserves a key connection to the Town Center and commuter rail station. This project also prevents future flooding issues by enhancing drainage in the project area and addressing the existing tidal gate under the bridge, which is not currently functional. This project scores well in System Preservation and Modernization and has an overall score of 46 points.

***Discussion***

D. Mohler noted that the Clean Air and Sustainable Communities scores for these projects vary widely. M. Genova replied that there can be a high degree of variability on the scores as it relates to emissions. Part of the scoring is looking at improvements at intersections to see what the impact is on congestion and emissions. Even within one project area, there can be quite a bit of variability within that corridor. D. Mohler specifically asked why the Chelsea project received negative points for air quality when it seeks to improve transit operations.

J. Monty concurred, adding that the measures used to estimate emissions may not accurately reflect the long-term impacts of projects on mode shift. M. Genova added that MPO staff uses the federal Congestion Management and Air Quality (CMAQ) worksheets to calculate emissions reduction, and those worksheets tend to prefer changes in auto delay over other factors. D. Amstutz asked whether there is a way to mitigate this bias via the criteria revision process.

D. Amstutz asked about the Manchester-by-the-Sea project. M. Genova replied that this bridge is a priority for the municipality but has not yet risen to the top of MassDOT's list of priority bridges statewide.

M. Genova reviewed the Intersection Improvements projects evaluated this year.

***#608067: Intersection Reconstruction at Route 3 and Bedford Road in Burlington and Woburn***

This project will reconstruct the intersection and signals to improve safety and traffic operations at this high-crash location. Existing sidewalks will be reconstructed and new sidewalks will be added on the south side of South Bedford Street. New bike lanes will be added on all approaches, and the existing MBTA bus stops on Cambridge Street will be rebuilt to ADA standards. Because this project aims to reduce congestion, it scores well in capacity management and mobility and is the highest scoring intersection improvement project with an overall score of 52 points.

***#608940: Intersection Improvements at Boston Post Road (Route 20) at Wellesley Street in Weston***

This project will reconfigure the intersection to consolidate pavement area and simplify turning movements to improve safety at this high-crash location. The project will install a new traffic signal to reduce congestion and will improve multimodal accommodations by reconstructing existing sidewalks, adding new sidewalks, and constructing bike lanes through the intersection where none exist today. Enhancements will also be made to the school bus stop located adjacent to the intersection. This project has a total score of 40 points.

***#608955: Intersection Improvements, Squantum Street at Adams Street in Milton***

This project will install a traffic signal at an intersection that is currently unsignalized in an effort to enhance safety and reduce queuing during peak hours along Squantum Street. The reconstruction of existing sidewalks to ADA standards and the addition of bike lanes where none exist today will further enhance multimodal safety and accessibility at the intersection. This project has an overall score of 33 points.

***#608947: Traffic Signal Improvements on Route 109 in Westwood***

This project will upgrade traffic signals at six intersections along High Street in an effort to improve traffic flow along the corridor. New signals will include Adaptive Signal Control Technology, which will allow for signal timing to be dynamically updated based on real-time traffic demand, especially during peak commuting hours. The ability to directly coordinate with the emergency signal for the fire station just north of Windsor Road will also be included. This project has an overall score of 31 points.

***Discussion***

Tom Kadzis (City of Boston) (Boston Transportation Department) expressed the opinion that the cost estimates for each of these intersection projects are low.

B. Kane asked whether making MBTA bus stops in project locations ADA compliant is a requirement of the MPO. M. Genova replied that it is not a requirement of the MPO, but most projects attempt to address some level of ADA compliance.

L. Diggins stated that he would be interested in seeing some of these projects scored as tests when the MPO undertakes test scoring with its new draft criteria.

N. Freedman asked about the bicycle facilities being created by these projects. M. Genova replied that not all the facilities being created connect to existing facilities, but many of these projects are largely focused on improving vehicle flow and safety.

D. Mohler noted that there is a wide variation in the capacity management and mobility scoring in this category. M. Genova stated that he would follow up on this. M. Genova added that the current criteria do not reward projects for doing more, that is, the scoring remains the same whether or not a project improves one intersection or improves six. In addition, the scores for reducing vehicle delay are affected by the existing demand. If one location has less vehicle delay to begin with, it will not score as well in this category.

M. Genova reviewed the Major Infrastructure projects evaluated this year.

***#609246: Reconstruction of Western Avenue (Route 107) in Lynn***

This project will fully reconstruct 1.9 miles of Western Avenue beginning just south of the Lynn-Salem border and heading south towards central Lynn. The project will enhance safety for all users along this high-crash corridor through improved design and signal operations, new signs, and pavement markings. The project will also add new bike lanes and reconstruct existing sidewalks and ramps to bring them into ADA compliance. Furthermore, the project is exploring transit signal priority to accommodate MBTA bus routes 424, 434, and 450, and will also include the reconstruction of existing bus stops. Western Avenue is the highest scoring major infrastructure project with a total overall score of 76 points. It scores particularly well in Safety, Clean Air and Sustainable Communities, Equity, and Economic Vitality.

***#607981: McGrath Boulevard in Somerville***

This project will greatly enhance connectivity between the neighborhoods in East Somerville by bringing the elevated McCarthy Viaduct down to an at-grade urban boulevard. The reconstructed roadway will include a mix of off-street and protected bicycle facilities as well as completely rebuilt and widened sidewalks throughout the

corridor. The improvements along McGrath will connect with the extended Somerville Community Path and will improve multimodal access to the forthcoming Green Line Extension, which includes new stations at nearby Union Square and East Somerville. Opportunities for dedicated bus lanes and queue jumps are also being explored for the corridor. This project scores well in Equity and Economic Vitality and has an overall score of 74 points.

***#605313: Bridge Replacement, Route 27 over Route 9 and Interchange Improvements in Natick***

This project involves the complete reconfiguration of the existing interchange and overpass into a modified diverging diamond. The existing Route 27 bridge over Route 9 was built in 1931 and is listed as structurally deficient, and does not include appropriate multimodal accommodations. The modified interchange will include dedicated off-street facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, including a separate bike-ped bridge over Route 9 in between two spans that will support vehicular traffic. The enhanced shared-use facilities will improve connections to Natick Center and the nearby Cochituate Rail Trail. This project scores particularly well in Capacity Management and Mobility and Clean Air and Sustainable Communities and has an overall score of 66 points. Of note, all three of these major infrastructure projects are programmed in the FFYs 2025–29 time band in the long-range plan.

***#610545: Main Street Reconstruction in Wakefield***

This project will completely reconstruct Main Street and the surrounding roadways through downtown Wakefield. The project will narrow the existing roadway to include new dedicated bicycle facilities and expanded pedestrian facilities in the form of a new shared-use path along South Main Street. Shortened crossings and improved signals will further improve safety at intersections while increasing multimodal connectivity to MBTA bus routes 136 and 137, the Wakefield Commuter Rail station, and nearby recreational assets, including the proposed Wakefield-Lynnfield rail trail, which is a MassDOT-funded TIP project in 2024. This project scores well in Safety and Economic Vitality with a total overall score of 59. This project is not currently included in the long-range plan, but would need to be amended into *Destination 2040* to be programmed this year because the cost exceeds \$20 million.

***Discussion***

S. Page asked whether there is a particular reason the off-street bicycle and pedestrian projects score low for improving safety. M. Genova clarified that the safety scoring is based on whether there is a HSIP bicycle or pedestrian crash cluster in the project area, which means that projects receiving a score of 3 are doing what they can to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety in the absence of a crash cluster.

J. Monty asked about the projects currently programmed in *Destination 2040*. M. Genova replied that three of the Major Infrastructure projects are programmed in the 2025–29 time band of the LRTP, but do not yet have dedicated funding in the TIP. The MPO will discuss whether it wants to prioritize funding for one or a combination of these projects in this year's TIP cycle.

D. Amstutz stated that it would be helpful for there to be a proposal for possible ways to phase funding of these LRTP projects.

T. Kadzis asked about the design status of the LRTP projects. M. Genova replied that Somerville is Project Review Committee (PRC) approved, Lynn is PRC approved, and Natick is at 25 percent design, but the plans are from 2015 and will need to be updated.

S. Johnston reviewed evaluation scores for the pilot round of the MPO's Community Connections (CC). The CC program is the MPO's funding program for first- and last-mile solutions, community transportation, and other nontraditional transportation needs, as designated in the LRTP. The program is funded at a level of \$2 million per year in the TIP in FFYs 2021–24. The process for evaluating the projects has been slightly different from evaluating traditional roadway projects for the TIP. This year, MPO staff conducted a pilot round, releasing an application to a limited number of project proponents whose potential projects had been identified through outreach or MPO studies. After reviewing the process and outcomes of this round, staff will present the revised program framework to the MPO in advance of a fully public application period next year.

CC scores are out of a 60-point scale, rather than the 134-point scale currently used for most TIP projects. With requests from several proponents to program their funding in FFY 2022, the MPO actually has more money projected to be committed in that year than in FFY 2021. Each project that requests multiple years of funding will be required to provide certain data to the MPO and to MassDOT's CMAQ committee to verify its continuing air quality benefit and, therefore, eligibility to continue to receive funding. Staff have been working with MassDOT to identify alternative pathways to administer capital projects, which are not eligible for CMAQ funding. The total programming recommendation in FFYs 2021–23 is \$2,126,709. This is less than the \$2.26 million received in requests. MPO staff found that two applications were not a fit for the CC program at this point. The Cohasset Route 3A sidewalks project is recommended to apply for regular TIP funding, and the Lexpress Service improvements project could reapply in a future year once a more detailed project plan is created. The Watertown Transportation Management Association (TMA) Pleasant Street shuttle project was funded through other means.



The projects that are being recommended for funding are as follows.

***Newton Microtransit***

The City of Newton will use the funding that the MPO provides to roll out a citywide microtransit-type service, with a focus on transportation to transit stations. This service will build on the NewMo senior mobility microtransit service they are already running, as well as the Wells Avenue business district shuttle that they are funding with a grant from MassDOT's Rail and Transit division. The City has assembled an impressive group of private and nonprofit partners that allows them to provide funding for the service going forward.

***Davis Square Signal Improvements***

The City of Somerville will use this funding to improve signals at the Davis Square busway, an important bus hub and transfer point to the Red Line, and throughout the square. They anticipate these improvements will speed up bus travel and improve pedestrian safety.

***Concord Avenue Transit Signal Priority (TSP)***

The City of Cambridge will use CC funding to implement TSP along the Concord Avenue corridor from Harvard Square to the Belmont town line. This is expected to improve bus travel time and reliability along the corridor.

***Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT) Bike Shelters***

The Town of Concord wants to fund new, protected bike racks on the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail where it meets the MBTA West Concord Commuter Rail station. In addition to providing safe commuter bike parking, the town anticipates that these racks will provide a resource for the business district around the station, as those who bicycle will be able to lock up their bikes along the trail and walk to local businesses that may not have dedicated bike parking. The BFRT was a previous TIP project, and improvements of this sort were recommended by MPO staff in a previous technical assistance memo.

***Sharon Carpool Marketing***

The Town of Sharon requested a one-time grant to fund a partnership with a carpool marketing company to promote shared rides (using private vehicles, this is not a transportation network company/ride-hailing partnership) to its train station to reduce vehicle trips and alleviate parking pressures.

The following projects are not programmed in FFY 2021 at the request of their proponents, but in a future year, which is currently planned to be FFY 2022.

### ***Blue Bikes Expansion Phase 2***

One of the MPO's core missions is inducing cooperation, and here we see four municipalities—Chelsea being the lead, along with Arlington, Watertown, and Newton—collaborating to fund an expansion of the BlueBikes system. Phase 1 of this expansion, five docks in each municipality, will roll out this year, funded by MassDOT's Workforce Transportation Program. MPO funding will allow continued expansion in FFY 2022, bringing an additional four to five docks to each town. Notably, MPO funding will be used to pay Lyft/Motivate, the BlueBikes contractor, to run the system, rather than directly purchasing the docks, which would bring additional administrative complications.

### ***Canton Royall Street Shuttles***

MPO staff has been working together closely with Rail and Transit Division staff throughout, and the Canton Royall Street Shuttles project will split its funding between the MPO and Rail and Transit. They have received the first year of funding through the MassDOT program and are asking the MPO to fund the second and third years of the shuttle, since Rail and Transit's program asks applicants to reapply each year. The project will fund shuttles from the Red Line, Mattapan Station, and the Route 128 commuter rail station to a major office park on Royall Street near the Route 138/93 interchange in Canton.

### ***Alewife Wayfinding***

The 128 Business Council has asked the MPO to score an application to implement a variety of wayfinding solutions for its shuttles operating from Alewife station, including signage and GPS tracking equipment. This project is tentatively programmed in FFY 2022, as TMAs cannot receive CMAQ grants directly, and 128 Business Council asked for a delay in programming funding to work out a partnership with the MBTA or the City of Cambridge.

### ***Discussion***

D. Mohler asked whether staff is recommending that the MPO fund everyone who applied regardless of how low the project scored. S. Johnston stated that funding is available for all the projects, taking scores with a grain of salt given that this is a pilot round. S. Johnston stated that staff recommends moving forward and developing more sophisticated evaluations as needed.

L. Diggins asked whether the Sharon project will assess whether the marketing was successful. S. Johnston stated that this project actually applied as a capital project, so evaluation was not required as with operations projects. This will be incorporated into staff's review of the program going forward.

Samantha Silverberg (MBTA) stated that the MBTA has reviewed the projects that require MBTA coordination and is satisfied that they align with the MBTA's goals. Some MBTA staff have expressed concerned about potential cost overruns. S. Johnston stated that in the short term there is extra money available for contingencies. In the longer run, leaving contingencies is something the MPO can consider.

B. Kane asked where the money will go if the MPO does not fund all the CC projects. D. Mohler stated that the money may either be unallocated for contingencies or be reallocated to help mitigate cost overruns in other projects.

### **11. Members Items**

D. Mohler stated that the MPO would meet on March 5, 2020. A Unified Planning Work Program Committee meeting will be held prior to the board meeting. D. Mohler encouraged members to attend given that the discussion may include an amendment to the TIP.

### **12. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the SouthWest Advisory Planning Council (Town of Medway) (G. Trindade). The motion carried.

## Attendance

<b>Members</b>	<b>Representatives and Alternates</b>
At-Large City (City of Everett)	Jay Monty
At-Large City (City of Newton)	Nicole Freedman
At-Large Town (Town of Arlington)	Daniel Amstutz
At-Large Town (Town of Lexington)	Sheila Page
City of Boston (Boston Planning & Development Agency)	Jim Fitzgerald
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	Tom Kadzis
Federal Highway Administration	Brandon Wilcox
Federal Transit Administration	
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	David Mohler
MassDOT Highway Division	John Bechard
	John Romano
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)	Samantha Silverberg
Massachusetts Port Authority	
MBTA Advisory Board	Brian Kane
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham)	Thatcher Kezer, III
Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Acton)	
North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly)	Denise Deschamps
North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn)	Tina Cassidy
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Lenard Diggins
South Shore Coalition (Town of Rockland)	Jennifer Berardi-Constable
South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway)	Glenn Trindade
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce)	Tom O'Rourke

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<b>Other Attendees</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Steve Olanoff	TRIC Alternate
Karen Dumaine	Neponset Valley Transportation Management Association
Joe Blankenship	BPDA
Bill Renault	Town of Wakefield
Marzie Galazka	Town of Swampscott
John Thompson	Town of Milton
Chase Berkeley	Town of Milton
Peter Spellios	Town of Swampscott
Ben Cares	City of Chelsea
Jaklyn Centracchio	BETA Group, Inc.
Timothy Paris	MassDOT Highway District 4
Greg Lucas	BETA Group, Inc.
Yem Lip	City of Malden
Sarah Bradbury	MassDOT Highway District 3
Lori Steans	MassDOT Highway District 6
James Kupfer	Town of Bellingham
Catherine Cagle	City of Waltham
Herb Nolan	Solomon Foundation
Frank Tramontozzi	City of Quincy

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**MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff**

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Tegin Teich, Executive Director  
Annette Demchur  
Róisín Foley  
Hiral Gandhi  
Matt Genova  
Sandy Johnston  
Anne McGahan  
Marty Milkovits  
Ariel Patterson  
Scott Peterson  
Michelle Scott  
Kate White

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