

Thursday, May 19, 2022

Boston Region MPO Board
10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150
Boston, MA, 02116

Dear members of the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Board:

The Regional Transportation Advisory Council (RTAC) reviewed the MPO's Federal Fiscal Year 2023 to 2027 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). We would like to offer the following comments for your consideration.

Overall assessment

We appreciate that the MPO decided to allocate the additional federal funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) according to the goals defined in the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The RTAC is pleased that the Commonwealth also increased funding for urgently needed repairs of bridges, highways, and streets. In addition, the RTAC highly values that the TIP retains a strong focus on projects to create "complete" streets, modernize transit, and improve conditions for bicycling and walking around our region.

We welcome the use of the MPO's transparent and consistent project evaluation process. We noted that many of the Commonwealth's projects are not scored using this evaluation process, including two late entries for transit modernization projects. The RTAC anticipate the MPO's confirmation that all unscored projects will achieve all relevant LRTP goals and objectives. The RTAC believes that the best TIP would have all projects evaluated by the MPO. An alternative could be for agencies to provide evaluation information such as the project's ranking within the agency's own prioritization or something similar.

Finally, we are glad that the MPO continues to use a cost-benefit analysis to select projects, even when they are for small amounts. Specifically, we appreciate that the MPO funds low-cost, and high-scoring projects equally as regularly as major infrastructure projects.

Looking toward future years

The RTAC would like to take the opportunity to share our thoughts for future TIPs. We understand that, as a result of new funding from the federal government and Commonwealth, more projects are in this TIP than is typical. Thus, there may be fewer projects that are soon to be ready for TIP evaluation or meet LRTP goals. We recommend the MPO provide technical assistance in accordance with current LRTP goals and objectives. Given the MPO's regional focus, the RTAC are concerned especially for municipalities in the region with limited financial or technical resources. We note that the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) states that the success of its pandemic-response Shared Streets and Spaces program was, in part, the technical assistance that centered the goals of the program.

Thank you all very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Len Diggins, Regional Transportation Advisory Council, Chair