

MPO Meeting Minutes

Draft Memorandum for the Record

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting

March 21, 2024, Meeting

10:00 AM–12:30 PM, State Transportation Building and 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 February 15, 2024

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

See attendance on page 12.

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

There was none.

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

T. Teich announced two retirements from the staff: Ben Krepp and Kathy Jacob.

T. Teich stated that the next meeting on April 4, 2024, will be hybrid. T. Teich also announced a new meeting on April 11, 2024.

4. Public Comments

Senator Will Brownsberger spoke in support of the Belmont Community Path project and noted the project's significance and benefit to the town and region.

Roy Epstein, Town of Belmont, spoke in support of the Belmont Community Path project and noted the project's significance and benefit to the town and region and the project's local support.

Patrice Garvin, Town of Belmont, spoke in support of the Belmont Community Path project and noted the project's significance and benefit to the town and region and the project's local support.

Dominick Pangallo, City of Salem, spoke in support of the Boston Street Improvements project in Salem and urged the MPO not to delay the project past federal fiscal year (FFY) 2027.

Pam Helinek, Town of Hudson, spoke in support of the Hudson Mass Central Rail Trail Extension project and its application for design funding. P. Helinek stated that the Town is working on a pre-25 percent design study, has local support, and noted the project's benefit in continuing and creating trail connections.

Charles Creagh, City of Cambridge, spoke about the Cambridge project design funding application for the new bridge and shared-use path connection over the MBTA Fitchburg Line at Daheny Park project. C. Creagh stated that Cambridge obtained a Reconnecting Communities grant funding award that may cover design costs and requested that the project be moved to construction funding in the outer years of the FFYs 2025-29 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Allie Ruel, City of Quincy, spoke in support of the Quincy Intersection Improvements at Willard Street and Ricciuti Drive project application.

Cynthia Dittbrenner, The Trustees of the Reservations, spoke in support of the Ipswich Argilla Road project and its benefits for resilience and safety.

David Kucharsky, City of Salem, spoke in support of the Boston Street Improvements project in Salem and noted that the City is actively working on the project.

John Cashell, Town of Woburn, spoke in support of the Woburn downtown improvement project and advocated for the project to not be deprogrammed from the FFYs 2025–29 TIP.

Brad Rawson, City of Somerville, spoke in support of the board's consideration of projects as well as process improvements for the TIP.

Marcia Rassmussen, Town of Sudbury, spoke in support of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Phase Three project in Sudbury and Framingham and advocated for the project.

5. Committee Chairs' Reports

There were none.

6. Regional Transportation Advisory Council Report—*Lenard Diggins, Chair, Regional Transportation Advisory Council*

L. Diggins stated that the Advisory Council discussed the TIP, Unified Planning Work Program, and received a presentation of peer advisory councils.

7. Action Item: Approval of February 1, 2024, MPO Meeting Minutes Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

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

Vote

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of February 1, 2024, was made by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) (Eric Bourassa) and seconded by the City of Boston (Jen Rowe). The motion carried.

8. FFYs 2025-29 TIP Initial Funding Scenario—*Ethan Lapointe, MPO Staff*

Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

2. Initial Funding Scenario ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))
3. Project Descriptions ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))
4. Project Scores ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))
5. Project Evaluation Metrics ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))
6. MBTA Project Readiness Information ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))
7. MassDOT Highway Division Requests ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

All referenced tables, figures, and slides are found in the meeting presentation on the MPO website, linked here: [MPO Presentation 3/21/2024](#)

Ethan Lapointe set the agenda for the meeting by describing the documents provided (listed above).

The Scenario #2 document is referenced on slide 22 of the MPO Presentation 3/21/2024. Scenario #1 was presented to the TIP Committee the week of March 14.

E. Lapointe described the packet of TIP projects descriptions (slide 23), which was reviewed at the March 7, 2024, MPO board meeting.

He also described the project scoring summary (slide 24), with new project scores for a few projects. There was also a draft table of evaluation metrics for new projects (slide 25). This list is incomplete because some of the design pilot projects have data gaps that require update.

The last resource was the MBTA projects for consideration for FFY 2025 and FFY 2026, including a list of their project readiness status (slide 27).

E. Lapointe stated that at the last TIP Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee meeting, the committee discussed the priorities and strategies through which the new TIP scenario could be developed and what the committee wanted to address. In this meeting, E. Lapointe stated they are hoping to get early votes and actions on the most pressing needs of fiscal constraint. E. Lapointe then summarized the TIP scenario in front of the board.

Of the 28 projects in the MPOs Regional Target funding program, not including Community Connections projects, 16 are delayed. Six of nine projects in FFY 2025 are delayed, and five of seven in FFY 2026. Thirteen projects saw cost increases, leading to obstacles to fiscal constraint in FFYs 2027 and 2028. E. Lapointe reviewed the updated surplus and deficits measures for FFYs 2025–29, shown in the MPO presentation (slide 32). He said the main issues to solve are the surplus of funds in FFY 2025 and FFY 2026 and the deficits in FFY 2027 and FFY 2028, as well as decisions on how to allocate the new funds in FFY 2029.

The new scenario (slide 37) presented to the board achieved fiscal constraint in four of the five federal fiscal years. In FFY 2027 there was still a deficit, although it had been reduced from \$80 million to \$16 million. There was \$2.26 million to be allocated in FFY 2029 after accounting for project delays and cost increases, as well as prioritized MBTA, MassDOT, and regional transit authority projects.

E. Lapointe summarized the 10 Community Connections projects programmed for FFY 2025, detailed in the meeting presentation (slide 39).

E. Lapointe discussed the FFY 2025 Design Pilot. The MPO set aside \$4 million to fund a sample of design projects. Funding surpluses enabled more projects to be funded but still constrained by municipal and state staff capacity. The MPO staff recommended funding approximately \$10 million of the \$17.36 million requested.

E. Lapointe specified the difficulties of over-committing the design pilot funding. Although the money may be there currently, there is likely not enough staff at the municipal and state level to deliver these design projects on time. Further, future demand for MPO funding will increase when these design projects reach the construction stage, so it is important to keep in mind fiscal constraint as the MPO considers the requested list of design pilot projects.

E. Lapointe then detailed the inputs for FFY2026–29 of TIP Scenario #1.

- FFY 2026 is referenced on slides 43-45.
- FFY 2027 is referenced on slides 46-47.
- FFY 2028 is referenced on slide 48.
- FFY 2029 is referenced on slides 49-50.

E. Lapointe requested a vote on the following items (slide 53):

- FFY 2025 Community Connections Funding (slide 55)
- FFY 2025 and 2026: Regional Transit Authority Project Funding (slide 57)
- FFY 2025 and 2026: MBTA Project Funding (slides 59-70), including
 - o Additional funding for existing projects in FFY 2025
 - o Funding of new projects in FFYs 2025 and 2026
- FFY 2027: Addressing funding deficit
- FFY 2029: New projects and advance construction

E. Lapointe reviewed each of the above items in depth. He also described possible infill projects for FFY 2025 that were proposed by MassDOT (slides 71-72).

E. Lapointe stated that staff worked diligently to reduce the FFY 2027 deficit from \$80 million to \$16.5 million by deploying a number of strategies, including flex scheduling of construction work on programmed projects. Even still, he advised board members that the likelihood of needing to remove (“deprogram”) a project was still high. He stated that there are seven projects that, due to readiness issues, could be eligible for deprogramming.

E. Lapointe reviewed the seven FFY 2027 projects eligible for deprogramming: Boston’s Cambridge Street bridge, Everett’s reconstruction of Beacham Street, Ipswich’s South Central and Main Streets, Salem’s Boston Street improvements, Somerville’s McGrath Boulevard, Weston’s Route 30 reconstruction, and Woburn’s Route 38 and Woburn Common intersection improvements. The logistics and readiness challenges of these seven projects are described in-depth on slides 75-76.

E. Lapointe reviewed the final item for discussion, FFY 2029’s new projects. The FFY 2029 recommendation was to fund \$23.5 million in new projects and \$135.3 million in advance construction, for a total of \$158.8 million. The MPO’s federal allocation for FFY 2029 is \$161 million, leaving just over \$2 million for further allocation. This proposal is further outlined on slide 78.

Discussion

D. Mohler suggested the board move to discuss Item #4, the deficit in FFY 2027, due to anticipated agreement from the board on many of the other topics. He asked if

deprogramming refers to deletion of the project entirely or deferring the projects to further years beyond FFY 2029. E. Lapointe specified that deprogramming is intended to remove the project from the TIP and revert it to the TIP Universe, which is the list of all possible projects for the TIP.

E. Bourassa asked John Bechard or D. Mohler of MassDOT if it would be possible for MassDOT to absorb any of the cost of Boston's Cambridge Street project, given that it had previously been an infill project when the MPO had unallocated funds. D. Mohler stated that MassDOT's plans are fully constrained, and MassDOT would be unable to take on that project without deprogramming a project of its own, likely in the Boston region. J. Bechard concurred.

E. Bourassa asked if Boston's Cambridge Street project is a MassDOT project or a City of Boston project. J. Bechard clarified that it is a City of Boston project, even though it is a bridge and bridge projects are typically MassDOT's purview.

B. Sun from City of Boston Public Works Department stated that the Cambridge Street project is very important to the City as a precursor to the Rutherford Avenue project. The City initially had 100 percent design based on the City's bridge preservation approach, but it has since evolved into a TIP project and is now at 25 percent design due to increased scope from complying with Complete Streets protocol.

E. Bourassa asked what the impact would be if the project were delayed to 2030.

B. Sun stated that the impact would be to the adjacent project on Rutherford Avenue and the construction sequencing would be difficult. He also stated it would likely cause more transit service disruption if the two projects were happening concurrently.

J. Bechard said that the Cambridge Street bridge project was not eligible for the state's bridge program because it is fully constrained.

L. Diggins (Regional Transportation Advisory Council) stated that in general, he is in favor of not programming new projects in FFY 2029 instead of deprogramming any projects in FFY 2027. He said it is important for the MPO to honor its commitments to projects it has decided to put on the TIP. D. Mohler asked what the new projects in FFY 2029 add up to (\$23.5 million). E. Lapointe stated that any one project in FFY 2029 would not make up the deficit in FFY 2027; the MPO would likely have remove two or more projects.

D. Mohler asked if all the advance construction projects are a continuation of project spending that starts in FFY 2027 or FFY 2028. E. Lapointe confirmed that D. Mohler was correct.

Jim Fitzgerald (Boston Planning and Development Agency) said he would like to see what options would be available to move Boston's Cambridge Street bridge project to the state's program because it is unusual that a bridge would be the City of Boston's responsibility. D. Mohler stated that the board knows the implications and that it is unlikely that MassDOT will take on the project. The bridge did not rise high enough on MassDOT's prioritization process to warrant being on the state's bridge program. He stated that MassDOT will try to see what could be done but to not rely on or count on that scenario. J. Fitzgerald said he is not confident in delaying the project to 2030 because it needs to happen before the Rutherford Avenue project.

Tom O'Rourke (Three Rivers Interlocal Council subregion, Town of Norwood) agreed with L. Diggins that it seems fairer to not program any new projects for FFY 2029 than to deprogram any in FFY 2027. L. Diggins added that not adding any new projects could also act as a buffer against more cost increases that are likely to happen.

Jen Rowe (City of Boston) asked if any of the projects at risk for deprogramming had previously been delayed or if these are the first delays, noting that some projects have not seemed to move forward in design in some time. E. Lapointe answered that Everett's Beacham Street project, Ipswich's Central and South Main Street project, and Woburn's intersection improvement project have all been delayed at least once if not multiple times. Boston's Cambridge Street project was added to the TIP in the last cycle; so, though it is recommended for delay in this TIP, it is its first delay.

D. Mohler stated that the MPO keeps moving projects further and further back and that, at some point, if projects are unable to get ready, the MPO should be ready to deprogram them.

Kristen Guichard (MAGIC subregion, Town of Acton) asked if the Weston project needed town meeting approval for design or right-of-way approval, or both. E. Lapointe said he believed it was both.

Darlene Wynne (North Shore Task Force, City of Beverly) asked if anyone could speak to the Woburn project's readiness. E. Lapointe stated that the project has been pushed back a number of times and it is not yet at 25 percent design.

J. Cashell of the City of Woburn spoke online that there has recently been a change in the mayoral administration, and that the new mayor and councilors are all in full support of the project. He apologized on behalf of the City to the MPO for not getting the project ready faster, but did say that they are working with their contractor to move towards 75 percent design as soon as possible.

D. Giombetti asked if anyone from Weston could talk about how many right-of-way takings are on the strip because that appears to be the biggest risk to the project.

J. Bechard said there are 39 permanent easements and 88 temporary easements, and coordination with the Department of Conservation (DCR) is required on a parcel.

J. Rowe asked if they had heard from all the municipalities that have projects at risk for deprogramming. E. Lapointe confirmed the board has heard from all the municipalities except Weston, whose staff has communicated with MPO staff directly but has not yet come before the board.

Erin Chute (At Large Town, Brookline) asked where the large cost increase of 84 percent for the Boston Street project in Salem came from. E. Lapointe stated that given the current state of the roadway, the proponents discovered they will need to do a full depth reconstruction and are now interfacing regarding utility relocation and trolley track removal.

L. Diggins clarified that he does not want to advocate for keeping projects on the TIP if they are not showing progress. He said the board will need to think about the ramifications of the Woburn project because the project will likely increase in cost.

Jay Monty (At Large City, City of Everett) agreed that the MPO should fulfill its commitment to its previously programmed projects but also stated that the MPO should be strategic when deciding which projects from FFY 2027 to push forward to FFY 2029.

E. Bourassa said that given the information received today, it would be helpful to have representatives from Weston come to the TIP Committee and talk about their plan for getting 39 easements at town meeting. Regarding the Woburn project, he agreed with L. Diggins that the Woburn project is unlikely to be ready for FFY 2027 and is a good candidate to be pushed to FFY 2029. He asked if the Ipswich project was in the town's downtown area. E. Lapointe confirmed that it is, and that it requires coordination with DCR and the Town's historic commission.

D. Mohler asked if it were possible to take a project from FFY 2027 and move it to FFY 2028 and move a project from FFY 2028 to FFY 2029. E. Lapointe confirmed that it is possible, but the MPO will have to choose which new projects to not fund. D. Mohler asked if anyone would like to hear from any other municipalities besides Woburn, Ipswich, and Weston. He then clarified that it may be best to invite all the municipalities to advocate for their projects, except for Somerville, because the project is so large. He asked when the next TIP Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee meeting was. E. Lapointe stated it was the following Thursday, and that the next MPO meeting was the following Thursday after that. Dennis Giombetti agreed that the municipalities

should come to the TIP committee first, where they could then be encouraged to come to the full board meeting on April 4th.

D. Giombetti asked if the Weston project would be incapable of moving forward without the easements. E. Lapointe and J. Bechard confirmed that is likely to be the case.

J. Rowe asked if there was enough time to have the municipalities come to the TIP committee meeting, given they had already been invited and many had already advocated their projects. D. Mohler said J. Rowe made a good point, and perhaps it would be better for the municipalities to come to the next board meeting and present on their project's readiness—not the importance of the project, but the project's progress towards construction.

Sarah Lee (Massachusetts Port Authority) asked for clarification on how readiness should be presented because the MPO already knows the design level of a project. D. Mohler agreed and said it would be better to focus the conversations on specific project challenges, such as the easements in Weston.

J. Monty asked if it would be possible to have a TIP scenario where the MPO does not fund new projects. He also asked if MassDOT could also provide updates as to the likelihood of these projects being on time, given that it is sometimes the MassDOT review process that delays projects. D. Mohler asked to clarify if that meant the projects listed were possibilities for deprogramming. J. Monty confirmed yes.

John Romano (MassDOT Highway Division) asked if it were possible for some of the new projects in FFY 2029 to be funded and some pushed to FFY 2030, for example, programming \$10 million for the Woburn project in FFY 2029 and \$7 million in FFY 2030. E. Lapointe said that he is not sure if there is MPO precedent for “skipping” years of funding, i.e. funding a project in two or more nonconsecutive years.

E. Bourassa reiterated that he is uncomfortable deprogramming or pushing out projects to FFY 2029 whose representatives are not here today (Weston and Ipswich). He also mentioned that the possibility of removing the bike path from Weston's project would be a disappointment. E. Lapointe clarified that the removal of the bike path is not necessarily what the Town is thinking, rather it may be pared down or altered in some other way.

E. Bourassa said it does not seem like the FFY 2027 deficit issue is related to the FFY 2025 surplus. He said he has questions about those projects, but they are not as important. Sandy Johnston (MBTA) said that making decisions on the possible MBTA infill projects for FFY 2026 would be helpful for the MBTA's own capital programming

team. D. Mohler clarified he will not make a motion for that today. T. Teich (Boston MPO) clarified that S. Johnston was talking about infill projects. D. Mohler confirmed he understood.

S. Johnston also mentioned that the MBTA's Central Station Accessibility project (slide 26) was a top priority for the MBTA if any decisions on new projects were to be made today.

J. Cashell spoke again on the Woburn project and said this project has been in the works since the 1980s, and he realizes the importance of staying on the TIP and does not want to see it deprogrammed. He reiterated that the new mayor is eager to see this project done and that the City is going to pay for the design outright; so, they will be able to deliver a 100 percent designed project to the state if the project stays on the TIP but is pushed to FFY 2029.

L. Diggins said he wanted to discuss an element of the Community Connections, specifically the on-demand microtransit projects. Because they are expensive and lose their funding after three years, the MPO needs to think about the longevity of these projects. He requested the MPO board deliberate on this issue after dealing with the TIP.

Christopher Hart (MBTA) spoke on the challenges of the Central Station Accessibility project and asked that an answer on that project be delivered as soon as possible, so that the project can be put out to bid.

Jon Rockwell (TEC Consulting) spoke on the Ipswich project. The consulting firm had submitted a 25 percent design to MassDOT and, after receiving comments, expanded the scope of improvements at one of the intersections. This did push the project back, but the Town of Ipswich is fully committed to moving the project forward. He asked that the MPO keep the Ipswich project in FFY 2027.

D. Mohler asked S. Johnston if it would be helpful if the board gave a commitment to \$4 million for the Central Station Accessibility improvement project. S. Johnston said it would be. D. Mohler said that the MBTA can count on the MPO to fund that \$4 million investment.

A motion to invite communities at risk of having projects deprogrammed from FFY 2027 to the next TIP Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee meeting to discuss readiness was made by the City of Boston (J. Rowe) and seconded by MAPC (E. Bourassa). The motion carried.

D. Mohler reiterated to E. Lapointe and support staff that he was appreciative of all the hard work that went into the presentation. D. Mohler went over the schedule for the next few meetings. The next meeting would be on April 4, 2024, in the same location.

A motion to adjourn was made by the MAPC (E. Bourassa). The motion carried.

9. Members' Items

There were none.

10. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by the MAPC (E. Bourassa). The motion carried.

Attendance

Members	Representatives and Alternates
At-Large City (City of Everett)	Jay Monty
	Eric Molinari
At-Large City (City of Newton)	David Koses
At-Large Town (Town of Arlington)	John Alessi
At-Large Town (Town of Brookline)	Erin Chute
City of Boston (Boston Planning & Development Agency)	Jim Fitzgerald
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	Jen Rowe
Federal Highway Administration	
Federal Transit Administration	Kirstie Hostetter
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
	Brad Rawson
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	David Mohler
	John Bechard
MassDOT Highway Division	John Romano
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)	Sandy Johnston
Massachusetts Port Authority	Sarah Lee
MBTA Advisory Board	
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham)	Dennis Giombetti
Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Acton)	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
South Shore Coalition (Town of Hull)	
South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Wrentham)	Rachel Benson
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood)	Tom O'Rourke
	Steve Olanoff

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Stephanie Abundo	
Karl Allen	City of Chelsea
Sarah Bradbury	MassDOT
Miranda Briseño	MassDOT
Rob Cahoon	VHB
John Cashell	Town of Woburn
Tina Cassidy	
Rick Clarke	Town of Ipswich
Charles Creagh	City of Cambridge
Bill Deignan	City of Cambridge
Pat Deschenes	
Chris Desprez	
Tom DiPersio	
Cynthia Dittbrenner	The Trustees of the Reservations
Trish Domigan	VHB
Sam Downes	Town of Brookline
Wes Edwards	MBTA
Daniela Espinosa	Boston Planning and Development Agency
JR Frey	Town of Hingham
Patrice Garvin	Town of Belmont
Glenn Geiler	MBTA
Joy Glynn	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority
Jarrod Goentzel	Friends of the Belmont Community Path
John Gossin	MBTA
Tom Green	
Christopher Hart	
Pam Helinek	Town of Hudson
Chris Klem	MassDOT
Josh Klingenstein	MBTA
Raissah Kouame	MassDOT
Derek Krevat	MassDOT
David Kucharsky	City of Salem
Jackie LaFlam	Cape Ann Transportation Authority
Eduardo Marques	Cape Ann Transportation Authority
Tiffany Martinez	
Richard McCarthy	
Tom McHugh	Metacomet Greenway
Benjamin Muller	MassDOT
Josh Ostroff	MBTA
Sheila Page	Town of Lexington
Dominick Pangallo	City of Salem
Marcia Rasmussen	Town of Sudbury

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Jon Rockwell	TEC, Inc.
Allie Ruel	City of Quincy
Michelle Scott	MassDOT
Cara Seiderman	
Cheryll-Ann Senior	MassDOT
Matt Shute	
Cam Sullivan	
Ben Sun	
Frank Tramontozzi	City of Quincy
Michael Trepanier	MassDOT
Frank Ventimiglia	Town of Ipswich
Andrew Wang	MassDOT
Jack Witthaus	City of Malden

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Tegin Teich, Executive Director
Silva Ayvazyan
Abby Cutrumbes
Judy Day
Annette Demchur
Hiral Gandhi
Betsy Harvey
Dave Hong
Jia Huang
Stella Jordan
Ali Kleyman
Ethan Lapointe
Erin Maguire
Gina Perille
Sarah Philbrick
Sean Rourke
Sam Taylor

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