

WORKING DOCUMENT
MEMORANDUM

DATE:
TO: Boston Region MPO Board
FROM: [Insert author(s) name(s)]
RE: Regional Transportation Authority Representation Recommendation

This memorandum summarizes the recommendations from the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Update Committee on the topic of regional transportation authority (RTA) representation on the MPO board.

1 BACKGROUND

In their 2022 Federal Certification Review, the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration issued the Boston Region MPO a recommendation to make meaningful revisions to the 2011 MOU. The Review Team noted that these revisions would provide an appropriate opportunity to formally address representation of RTAs in the Boston region. Relevant RTAs in the Boston region include the Cape Ann Transportation Authority (CATA) and the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA).¹

The topic of RTA representation was first mentioned in the 2014 Federal Certification Review, where the federal review team recommended that the MPO work cooperatively with MWRTA and CATA to ensure that they are represented on the BRMPO board in a way that is satisfactory to all parties and satisfies the MAP-21 requirement for transit representation on MPO boards.² The recommendation did not express a preference for the form that RTA representation should take and proposed potential solutions such as full or fractional representation on the board for each RTA; a single seat that rotates between the RTAs; a transit or intermodal 'functional sub-region' representative similar to the geographical sub-region representatives already on the board; indirect representation through another MPO board member (e.g., MBTA or

¹ CATA's service area includes Gloucester, Rockport, Ipswich, Essex, and Hamilton. MWRTA's service area includes Hudson, Marlborough, Southborough, Framingham, Hopkinton, Milford, Hopedale, Ashland, Holliston, Sudbury, Wayland, Sherborn, Natick, Dover, Weston, Wellesley, and Newton.

² Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act

MassDOT) supplemented by voting membership for both RTAs on the Regional Transportation Advisory Council; or some other form of representation agreed upon by all parties. In 2019, after reviewing and discussing various options for RTA representation on MPO boards, the board opted to pilot and then permanently establish a Transit Working Group that included RTAs and other diverse transit provider representation in the region. The MPO board intended this to be an opportunity for the RTAs to have a voting seat on the board, representing the interests of the transit committee. Ultimately, this structure was not agreed upon by the RTAs as being satisfactory representation.

The 2022 Federal Certification Review noted this outcome and further recommended finding a resolution to RTA representation. At the November 30, 2023, Annual Meeting, the Boston Region MPO Board delegated revisions of the MOU in response to recommendations including the RTA representation to an MOU Update Committee. It is in this forum that the recommendation in this memorandum was developed.

2 COMMITTEE DELIBERATION

To begin conversations about the appropriate RTA representation to recommend to the full board, MOU Update Committee members reviewed the federal regulations related to the composition of MPO boards. MPO staff met with CATA and MWRTA to understand their vision for representation on the board and to elaborate on the incentive to join the MPO board. This information was shared with committee members at the February 7 committee meeting. The RTAs proposed a permanent seat on the board that would alternate between the two RTAs on a fixed cycle. The RTAs also later proposed acting as the alternate for one another.

The RTAs were invited to two subsequent committee meetings to address questions posed to them by committee members. Topics addressed in these conversations included their motivation for joining the MPO board, technical expertise, serviced populations, and staff capacity to partake in board activities. In response, RTA staff discussed guidance from the FTA to pursue representation on the board and the impact that MPO planning and investment in roadway and transit networks can have on its service operations. RTA staff also discussed the benefit that their perspective could bring to the board by virtue of their regular, on-the-ground interactions with passengers, including a significant population of riders requiring accessibility accommodations.

Other topics raised during discussions include the capacity of RTAs to participate in activities expected of board members, including regular attendance at meetings and membership in at least one committee, the overall composition of the MPO board, and subregional funding investments over a 15-year period.

3 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

The MOU Update Committee recommends that the MPO board creates a permanent shared seat between CATA and MWRTA. This seat will rotate between the RTAs every two years. When one RTA holds the seat, the other RTA will be designated the alternate.

Should the recommendation be approved by the MPO board, it would be in effect with the signing of the updates to the MOU, produced by the MOU Update Committee, likely in late 2024.

DRAFT

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