

Wednesday, May 8, 2024

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

Re: Draft Federal Fiscal Years 2025-2029 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

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

The Regional Transportation Advisory Council (Advisory Council) is an independent group of citizen and regional advocacy groups, municipal officials, and agencies charged with providing public input on transportation planning and programming to the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).

The Advisory Council has reviewed the MPO's Federal Fiscal Years 2025-2029 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and we offer some comments for your consideration:

- We continue to appreciate the extent to which the MPO staff, especially the TIP Manager, Ethan Lapointe, has worked closely with the Advisory Council (especially the Chair) each step along the way. He attended many Advisory Council meetings and had several additional conversations with the Chair.
- We acknowledge and express our deep appreciation for the work of the TIP Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee (TIPPER). The challenges the Board faced this cycle were handled more effectively thanks to the TIPPER which decided to meet about twice/month from mid-February to mid-April. Getting a better handle on the reasons for project delays and/or significant cost increases allowed the MPO to make better decisions with respect to project selection or rescheduling. Thankfully the TIPPER is aware of the potential for similar challenges during the course of this TIP and the next TIP, and it is committed to working with the staff and the project proponents to keep a closer eye on progress of projects and their associated costs.
- We are pleased to see approximately \$6 million allocated to projects in the Design Pilot. We understand the MPO is limited by the availability of more project managers, but it's good to see the MPO trying to do what it can with the resources it has.
- We appreciate the extra effort made by CATA, MWRTA, MassDOT, and the MBTA to provide the MPO with as much info as possible regarding the merits of their projects available for funding in FY25, and we are especially supportive of the MBTA-related projects some of which we feel will transform the services provided to transit riders. Also, we understand that the MPO was unable to score any of projects that presented by CATA, MWRTA, MassDOT, and the MBTA, but we feel it would be helpful to score the projects that were selected and perhaps

some that weren't selected so that we have a better assessment of the projects. Having a sense of their scores may prove helpful if/when we find ourselves in a similar situation.

- Regarding the Chelsea Revere-Regional On-Demand Microtransit Pilot Project, as much we support the goals of on-demand microtransit, the inability of similar projects to remain viable after MPO funding is no longer available causes us much concern. Not only do we wonder if the funds are better spent on other transit/transportation projects in that area, but we feel that it's hard to whole-heartedly support and promote a service that will likely have a short lifespan. We hope that we are wrong about this, and we hope that this project will be the one that is wildly successful and will shed light on how to create and run effective and sustainable microtransit services.

- We applaud the increased effort the MPO is making toward more fully evaluating the results of projects after they are completed. We know this requires a very large amount of effort that in and of itself comes a cost, but as we have done with the MPO's equity-based goals, we support the MPO's determination go above the minimum requirements in order to assess the benefits that result from the projects that have been implemented.

- The equity analysis is thorough and superb in its presentation. More importantly, though, the results of the equity analysis is encouraging. It appears that the MPO is doing a good job of selecting projects that will benefit equity populations. One concern, however, is the dramatic dip in the projected reduction of emissions for the LEP population. We hope this is just an outlier, and we trust that more analysis will be done to identify the cause for the large dip.

In closing, the encyclopedic nature of the TIP is impressive, and it makes the document a valuable resource. We especially appreciate the effort that goes into putting together the extensive set of appendices. Though we have many more comments we could offer, we feel that these are sufficient for now. As always, we thank you for your comprehensive attention and for being cooperative colleagues as we all continue striving to improve transportation for everyone in the Boston Region.

Sincerely,
The Advisory Council

