

**The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization
Public Participation Program**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization	1
Transportation Planning and Programming Committee	2
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	2
Objectives for Public Participation	2
Approach to Providing for Public Participation.....	3
Certification Documents	8
The MPO’s Memorandum of Understanding	11
Development of the Public Participation Program	11
Other Avenues of Input.....	12
Related Outreach Conducted by Individual MPO Members	12
Federal Transit Administration Public Hearing Requirements.....	12
Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA (AACT)	13
Public Involvement for Other Studies and Reports	13
Appendix A – The Boston Region MPO's Regional Equity Program.....	14
Appendix B – Minority Representation on Decision-Making Bodies.....	16
Appendix C – Contacts in the Regional Equity Program.....	17

THE BOSTON REGION METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROGRAM

This document describes the MPO's public participation program and the policies and principles that guide its communications and consultations with interested parties and other members of the public.

THE BOSTON REGION METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is a cooperative board composed of 14 state, regional, and local entities: the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), the MBTA Advisory Board, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation Highway Division (two members), the Massachusetts Port Authority, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), the City of Boston, three elected cities, and three elected towns. Three other members participate in a nonvoting capacity: the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and the Regional Transportation Advisory Council.

The elected members serve for three-year terms, which are staggered so that each year, one city and one town seat are up for election. MAPC and the MBTA Advisory Board conduct the elections for the MPO and are responsible for distributing information and soliciting participation. All election information is posted on both the MPO and the MAPC websites.

The MPO must maintain a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process (3C process) that is consistent with the planning, land use and economic development, and social and environmental goals of the region. The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), of 2005, and Federal Highway Administration/Federal Transit Administration joint planning regulations (23 CFR Part 450 and 49 CFR Part 613) establish these planning requirements.

The MPO is responsible for carrying out the 3C process in the region and completing all transportation plans, programs, and conformity determinations required by federal and state laws and regulations. This includes preparation of the major certification documents: the Long-Range Transportation Plan, the Unified Planning Work Program, the Transportation Improvement Program, and all required air quality analyses. (Specific public participation activities conducted for these documents are discussed later in this document.) The MPO initiates studies to identify transportation needs and solutions, and programs financial resources for the region's multimodal transportation system.

Public participation is an integral and valuable part of the MPO's planning processes. The information and views gathered through the MPO's many public participation activities provide needed input data for evaluations and guidance for decision making. All MPO planning work is improved by these activities.

Much of the work of public involvement and consultations is done through standing committees formed by the MPO. Members of the public are welcome to attend these meetings and provide input. A description of each of the key transportation committees in the region follows. In addition to the committees, the MPO has a Regional Equity Program, which is an ongoing initiative to reach out to low-income and minority populations.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE

The Transportation Planning and Programming Committee is a standing committee of the MPO. It is composed of all Boston Region MPO voting members or their designees, and the Regional Transportation Advisory Council. The Secretary of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation appoints the chair. The full Committee elects the Vice Chair, who must be a municipal or regional agency member.

The Committee acts on behalf of the MPO and meets regularly to provide ongoing coordination of planning work in the region. Committee meetings are open to the public and members of the public are invited to participate, particularly during the development of the certification documents; the meeting schedules are posted on the MPO's website, published in the MPO's newsletter, *TRANSREPORT*, and posted at the Office of the Secretary of State of the Commonwealth and at the Office of Administration and Finance.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Advisory Council was created and is supported by the MPO to be a conduit for public input responsible for generating broad and timely participation by bringing together representatives of advocacy groups (including freight, accessibility, bicycle, and pedestrian groups), business leaders, and municipal and regional representatives concerned with land use and development, the environment, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. The Advisory Council holds monthly public meetings traditionally scheduled on the second Wednesday of the month in the State Transportation Building. Special forums, field trips, and focus group sessions may be scheduled at other times and locations. The Advisory Council Chair appoints committees to participate in the development of the MPO's certification documents (the Long-Range Transportation Plan, Unified Planning Work Program, and Transportation Improvement Program), forms other committees as needed, votes on the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee, and is a nonvoting member of the MPO.

OBJECTIVES FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The following principles, developed in conjunction with current best-practice standards for public participation, guide the program. These, and appropriate measures, will be considered in the MPO's reviews of the effectiveness of this Public Participation Program:

- *Promote Respect:* All transportation constituents and the views they promote are respected.
- *Provide Opportunities for Involvement:* Avenues for involvement should be open, meaningful, and organized to let people participate comfortably, taking into consideration accessibility, scheduling, location, formats of informational materials, and language; structured to allow informed, constructive exchanges; promoted in a way that reaches out energetically; and clearly defined in the early stages of document or study development.
- *Be Responsive to Participants:* MPO forums should facilitate discussion that corresponds to participants' levels of interest and available time. Informational materials should be clear and concise and address participants' questions. Information should be available in sufficient detail to allow citizens to form independent views. The results of all public involvement activities will be given full consideration in all MPO decision making. They will be reported in all relevant documents. The MPO will also discuss its reasoning in arriving at final decisions in its responses to public comments.
- *Offer Substantive Work:* Public processes should provide participants purposeful involvement, allowing useful feedback and guidance. Participants should be encouraged to grapple with the many competing transportation interests, issues, and needs in the MPO region.
- *Provide a Predictable Process:* The planning process shall be understandable and known well in advance. This will make the process more coherent and comprehensive, allowing members of the public and officials to plan their time and apply their resources effectively.
- *Adopt New Avenues of Communication:* The program should be mindful of the revolution in communications and continue to evaluate new tools to expand the MPO's existing methods. To strengthen public participation in the planning process, visualization materials are used to communicate detailed information clearly.
- *Include New and Natural Constituencies:* Efforts to reach new and natural constituencies include continuing outreach to minority, low-income, elderly, youth communities, and persons with disabilities. There are also organizations and individuals who have a natural interest in transportation and who can provide important information and guidance.
- *Provide for Flexibility:* The direction and effectiveness of this program should be periodically reviewed to ensure that it meets the needs of the public and the MPO.

APPROACH TO PROVIDING FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Interested Parties and Members of the Public

The MPO reaches out to members of the public and interested parties and invites them to consult and share their views with the MPO prior to decision making. They include:

- Members of the general public
- Regional Transportation Advisory Council members
- Low-income and minority residents and organizations, and Regional Equity contacts
- The Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA
- Local officials (elected boards, town administrators, planning directors, and directors of departments of public works, and conservation commission agents), and state legislators, and public libraries
- Affected public agencies
- Groups representing bicyclists, pedestrians, persons with disabilities, users of public transportation, environmental resources, business interests, and transportation advocacy interests
- Representatives of public transportation employees and private transportation providers, and providers of freight transportation services
- Agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities (state and local planned growth, economic development, environmental protection, airport operations, and freight movements) and federal land management agencies

The MPO coordinates transportation planning with the four other MPOs in the Boston Urbanized Area: Merrimack Valley, Northern Middlesex, Old Colony, and Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organizations.

The MPO has an active role with two important advocacy groups in the region by providing staff support to the Access Advisory Board to the MBTA (see page 12 for a description of this committee) and to the MBTA Rider Oversight Committee (an organization that was set up to provide an avenue for input to the MBTA for transit system users). These links provide opportunities to share information and are an additional mechanism for identifying and keeping in touch with participants in the MPO's Regional Equity Program.

Considering the Needs of Low-Income and Minority Residents

The MPO conducts an ongoing program of consultation with low-income and minority residents and with groups representing their interests and those of potentially under-served populations, such as the elderly, youth, and non-native-English speakers.

The MPO takes a proactive, grassroots approach to identifying and articulating environmental justice issues in the region. Methods include gathering information on the transportation needs of minority and low-income populations for consideration in the development of studies and certification documents; identifying, sharing, and connecting new contacts and sources of information for the planning process; meeting new people interested in participating in the planning process; asking how MPO members can better represent minority and low-income

communities; and serving as a conduit for ideas on improving transportation that can be relayed to other agencies.

The MPO's Regional Equity Program identifies the transportation needs of minority and low-income populations and provides awareness of opportunities for involvement in the planning process. The program focuses on direct outreach to social service organizations serving environmental justice areas in the region, including conducting and participating in organized forums.

In carrying out these methods, the MPO identifies social service and community contacts in the environmental justice areas involved in, and knowledgeable about, the transportation issues and needs of their areas. These contacts include social service organizations; community development corporations; regional employment boards; civic groups; business and labor organizations; transportation advocates; environmental groups; and environmental justice and civil rights groups. The MPO's process for working with these community organizations consists of meeting with representatives and officials in their communities, gathering information, summarizing needs, sharing information and input with the MPO, and providing feedback once communication has begun.

The MPO also conducts analysis focusing on mobility, accessibility, and emissions for environmental justice neighborhoods. Results of these analyses are taken into consideration by the MPO, as is other information gathered through outreach in the Regional Equity Program and the participation of low-income and minority community members or their representatives. Transportation Improvement Program criteria and project evaluations used by the MPO in the selection of projects for the Transportation Improvement Program and the Long-Range Transportation Plan include the consideration of possible effects of a project on an environmental justice area.

The MPO deliberated the possibility of continuing its Environmental Justice Committee and decided instead to undertake more grassroots-level consultations with representatives of low-income and minority communities and going directly into the communities to gather input and solicit participation. The MPO Regional Equity Program was instituted to provide inclusive outreach and ongoing consultations with representatives of low-income and minority communities.

More detailed information on the Regional Equity Program is included in Appendix A. Information on minority representation in the MPO and other regional committees and groups is provided in Appendix B and in the MPO's Title VI Report, which is posted on the MPO's website. Appendix C is a list of Regional Equity contacts.

Types of Activities

The MPO has a variety of approaches to providing for communication and consultation with interested parties and members of the public and is continually working to improve its outreach. Interactive workshops, open houses, and small group discussions are key avenues for public input into the development of the MPO's certification documents; other planning deliberations,

such as its reviews as part of the State Implementation Plan revision process; and other planning products. These formats promote a consultative environment and an exchange of information and ideas. These activities are sometimes conducted in cooperation with sponsoring entities, such as municipalities, MAPC subregions, and community groups.

In addition, the MPO consults with officials and agencies with activities and interests that overlap, or that are affected by, transportation, in order to provide for coordination between MPO planning and that underway by others. Methods for these consultations include notification of the development of certification documents, requests for reviews and comparisons of information (particularly for environmental and historic resources discussed in the Plan), and invitations to participate in either interagency consultations or other MPO activities discussed above. For example, the agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities, such as state and local planned growth, economic development, environmental protection, airport operations, and freight movements, and federal land management agencies are invited to consult (as described in the previous sentence) during the development of the Long-Range Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program. These contacts include officials involved in planned growth (state and local), economic development, environmental protection, airport operations, and freight movements.

Some public involvement activities are conducted throughout the year as part of the MPO's ongoing exchange of information about transportation planning in the region. These include the monthly publication of *TRANSREPORT*, the MPO's website, MPO open houses, and the monthly Regional Transportation Advisory Council meetings. *TRANSREPORT* is well known as the central news clearinghouse for the region's transportation issues and has a circulation of over 2,500. It is available in several formats: print copies, accessible formats, online at the MPO's website, and by e-mail. From time to time, it includes special inserts focusing on a timely planning initiative, often with a special tear-off postcard for submitting comments. *TRANSREPORT* also notes informational materials available on the MPO's website so that individuals without Web access may request print copies.

The MPO's website, www.bostonmpo.org, is the primary location for current information about the MPO and all MPO activities, and for posting certification documents and other reports and studies. Its function is to make information available quickly and conveniently. It houses pages and links to reports and studies conducted by the MBTA and other agencies, and hosts the Advisory Council homepage. Information on the MPO's election process is housed on its own page. It also serves as an avenue for input with buttons for submitting comments and views, particularly on draft documents and studies. The MPO's website is becoming an important means for providing information to the public and for gathering input..

The Advisory Council and the MAPC subregions (with members usually representing planning departments, town administrators, or chief elected officials in each municipality in the subregion) provide ongoing venues for consultations with interested parties and members of the public.

The Regional Equity consultations and forums facilitate the participation of minority and low-income constituents.

The MPO developed the booklet “Be Informed, Be Involved” as a resource to provide information to people unfamiliar with the MPO’s planning process. This booklet contains information on the Boston metropolitan area, what the Boston Region MPO is, what the MPO does, how people can become informed and involved in the MPO’s planning process, frequently asked questions, and a glossary of transportation terms. The booklet has been translated into Spanish and is available on the MPO’s website. MPO staff placed copies of the booklet in all public libraries and main municipal office buildings in its area, and the MPO distributes these booklets or other summaries describing the MPO and the 3C process at all outreach events, including regional equity events. It will be updated regularly in order to ensure that information is clear and concise, provides useful information on the MPO and its processes, and graphics that facilitate comprehension of complex processes and relationships.

Other MPO activities are geared to the development of documents and studies, and are conducted to generate timely input from local officials, interested parties, and other members of the public. MPO “How-to” Seminars, TIP (Transportation Improvement Program) Municipal Input Day, MPO-sponsored workshops and open houses, and discussions with MAPC subregion representatives are examples of activities conducted at important milestones in the development of the certification documents.

To be in touch with organizations not traditionally involved, the MPO has an “Invite-Us-Over” program, which makes MPO representatives available to meet with groups and institutions interested in hearing about the metropolitan planning process and MPO work underway. The MPO’s Congestion Management Process often requires communication with local officials. MPO studies usually call for consultations with local officials and other members of the public.

MPO currently targets interest groups, municipalities, and advocacy groups. The MPO keeps its website current to provide timely information and to be more interactive. The MPO also updates its outreach literature to summarize the planning and programming process, the certification documents, and the roles of agencies involved in transportation planning in the region.

Logistics, Notifications, and Materials

All MPO-sponsored activities are conducted in locations that are accessible to people with disabilities and by public transportation. For workshops and open houses, the MPO strives to meet the needs of people requiring special services, such as translation for non-English speakers; these include signing, large-format printed materials, audiotapes, Braille materials, and escorts. Ten days’ advance request is recommended. Activities are also scheduled on varying dates, times, and locations throughout the region with the intention of providing convenient opportunities for participation.

The MPO provides public notification in a variety of ways, such as legal notices, press releases in all regional and local newspapers, flyers, posters, correspondence, and e-mail messages. These are available in accessible formats, such as Braille, large print, and audiotape. Organizations providing support for persons with disabilities also forward MPO notices to their constituents in accessible formats.

In general, all meetings and special events are posted on the MPO's website, linked to the Advisory Council homepage, published in *TRANSREPORT* and in MAPC's newsletter, and, if possible, other regional organizations' newsletters, and are also distributed through the MPO's one-way listserve, MPOinfo. In some instances, press releases and notices are sent to all regional and local news media, including disability-oriented media outlets. Notices are also distributed by MAPC to subregion contacts.

Certification documents and other reports and informational materials are available in varied formats, and all documents are posted on the MPO's website. Consideration is given to the use of formats other than PDF, if those formats improve accessibility for people with disabilities. Certification documents and reports are also available on compact disc and are printed for circulation through the United States Postal Service mail. The MPO makes documents available in the accessible formats noted above and stays informed of current best practices in this area. The MPO strives to write materials that are clear, concise, and jargon-free, and in which graphics and other techniques are used for succinct communication. Whenever possible, executive summaries of documents are prepared and documents include a key explaining how to navigate and find information in them.

Meeting materials are distributed by posting on the MPO's website and by e-mail, and, in some situation, buy U.S. mail. Print or e-mail notices of regular Advisory Council meetings are sent to members and interested parties on the mailing list seven days in advance.

A general schedule is established at the outset of the federal fiscal year to coincide with important milestones in the development of the certification documents. This gives members of the public a long-range view of opportunities for participation, particularly in document development, throughout the year. This schedule is posted on the MPO's website.

CERTIFICATION DOCUMENTS

The MPO's most important responsibility is carrying out the 3C transportation planning process for the Boston region. This process and the MPO's programming decisions are documented in the three certification documents: the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

The LRTP is developed every four years, and the UPWP and the TIP are developed annually. A special participation program is set up for the development of the LRTP. The program for the Plan includes outreach to, and consideration of the views of, members of the public, and consultations with interested parties, as noted above.

Typically, outreach for the TIP starts in December each year, when the MPO asks all municipalities to identify their TIP contact and the projects about which they want to provide updated information. This begins the annual exchange of technical information between the MPO and the project proponents in preparation for project evaluations and development of the upcoming TIP. In midwinter, the MPO sponsors "How-To" Seminars, targeted to local officials to provide explanations of the MPO process for TIP development and instructions on how to

provide updated information to the MPO staff. The MPO staff works closely with local officials throughout the TIP development process. In the spring, the MPO holds a Municipal TIP Input Day and an Agency TIP Input Day, days set aside by Transportation Planning and Programming Committee members for listening to proponents discuss their priority projects.

UPWP development also begins in midwinter with the “How-To” Seminars. Outreach continues with consultations with each of the MAPC subregions to identify their needs. The staff continues to communicate with the MAPC subregions on the UPWP and the TIP to learn about their project priorities.

The MPO typically seeks to streamline the participation process for the public by jointly circulating the draft TIP and draft UPWP for the documents’ 30-day public review and comment periods. The public comment periods usually begin in early to mid-summer. The MPO then conducts public workshops in locations around the region to provide opportunities for discussion and gathering input.

Amendments and Administrative Modifications

The MPO may amend any of the certification documents, including a Transportation Improvement Program. The Advisory Council and affected communities and constituencies are notified of pending amendments. Legal notices of amendments are placed in the region’s major English-language newspaper, Spanish-language newspaper, and minority-community newspaper, and are posted on the MPO’s website. Amendments have a 30-day public comment period in advance of MPO action. There may be exceptions in two types of circumstances. In extraordinary circumstances, such as an unforeseen regulatory requirement or funding deadline, the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee may vote to shorten the public comment period by as much as 15 days. In emergency circumstances, such as an existing or impending severe disruption to the integrity or safety of the transportation system that requires immediate action, or if there is a natural or human-caused hazard or disaster or a need to take immediate action to take advantage of an extraordinary funding opportunity, in the public interest, it may be waived.

An extended or an additional public comment period will be provided when a proposed amendment is significantly altered during the initial public comment period (for an extension) or after the close of the initial public comment period (for an additional comment period). The length of an extended public comment period is an additional 15 days from the notification of the extension. An additional public comment period is 30 days from the notification of the additional period.

The Advisory Council is provided an opportunity to develop comments prior to a decision on amendments. The subscribers of the MPOinfo listserv are notified. Municipal and agency representatives and members of the public are invited to attend the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee and MPO meetings at which amendments are discussed, and submit written or oral testimony.

For the Transportation Improvement Program, and consistent with federal guidelines, if a project is valued at \$5 million or less, the threshold for defining an amendment is a change of \$500,000 or more. The threshold for projects valued at greater than \$5 million is 10 percent or more of the project value. Changes below these thresholds may be considered administrative modifications. The Transportation Planning and Programming Committee acts on administrative modifications, and, although no public review period is required, one may be provided at the Committee's discretion.

Significant changes in funding level are announced through a variety of media, including notice on the MPO's website and e-mail notification to the municipalities in the region.

Public Review and Comment Periods for Certification Documents

The Transportation Planning and Programming Committee approves draft certification documents for public review. A comment period begins on the date announced in the legal notice of availability of the document. The Transportation Planning and Programming Committee will make all reasonable efforts to avoid conducting public comment periods and public outreach between December 15 and January 2. Documents and other relevant materials must be available on the MPO's website on the first business day of the public comment period and shortly afterward in compact disc and print formats. After the close of the public comment period, the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee votes to recommend action to the MPO. The MPO then meets to act on the recommendation.

Certification documents are circulated for comment during a 30-day public review period prior to their adoption by the MPO and submission to the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration. Comments are actively solicited in advance of and during review periods for the draft certification documents. Draft documents are distributed to legislators, municipal officials (chief elected officials, highway department directors, planning directors or planning board chairs, and conservation commissions), Regional Transportation Advisory Council members, MAPC representatives, Regional Equity contacts, and public libraries in each community. Notification of the documents' availability for public comment is also sent to all other interested parties and to the contacts noted above. Documents are provided in print and compact disc formats, and in accessible formats upon request.

Announcements of the availability and public comment periods for the certification documents are made through legal notices in the major regional English-language newspaper, Spanish-language newspaper, and minority community newspaper; press releases are sent to regional and local newspapers; and meeting notices are placed in *TRANSREPORT*, posted on the MPO's website, sent through MPOinfo, and if possible, in other print and electronic newsletters in the region. MPO meetings are posted with the Secretary of State and the Office of Administration and Finance. Special efforts are made to reach non-English-speaking residents through community organizations. Announcements include an invitation to comment; dates, places, and times of public workshops to discuss the documents; the date of the close of a public comment period; and instructions on where comments may be submitted. If a public comment period is shortened or waived, the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee will explain the reason in its public comment notice.

The staff regularly reports to the MPO on all comments received and issues raised in all public forums. Written comments, whether received on paper, through the website and its e-forms, or via e-mail, are presented in full and in summarized form to the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee. Summaries of verbal comments at meetings and forums are also prepared. A summary of comments and responses and copies of the original written comments are included as appendices to final documents. Comments and summaries of comments, with the names and addresses of authors, are maintained in MPO records.

The MPO allows adequate time to review and consider public comments, and to make appropriate adjustments. If significant changes to a draft document are made as it is finalized by the MPO or if important new issues are raised in it, an additional public comment period is provided.

The MPO acknowledges receipt of all written comments on certification documents by sending a written reply. If the comment refers to a specific document, a second reply, summarizing the MPO response and providing an explanation, is sent after final adoption of the document.

THE MPO'S MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

The most recent Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), approved in December 2001, is available on the MPO's website. The MPO circulates to the public proposed amendments prior to consideration for approval.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROGRAM

This Public Participation Program is developed in consultation with members of the public and interested parties listed above. It had a 45-day public review and comment period announced with the same steps as those for the certification documents. The final Program is posted on the MPO's website and is distributed on request in the formats used for the certification documents.

The MPO reviews the public participation program's progress and effectiveness on an ongoing basis. The evaluation uses both quantitative and qualitative measures, such as level of event attendance, number of comments received, use of the website, and the level of comfort with process, outcome, and sense of fair treatment. In addition, the MPO will develop a process for identifying measures for understanding the Public Participation Program's effectiveness in achieving its objectives. Evaluations include written and verbal comments provided by participants, and event exit surveys asking for participants' views on the process. The Transportation Planning and Programming Committee then develops and recommends modifications, as it deems necessary.

OTHER AVENUES OF INPUT

There are other means by which members of the public have access to the transportation planning process. Some of these pertain to the MPO directly and others to member organizations.

RELATED OUTREACH CONDUCTED BY INDIVIDUAL MPO MEMBERS

The MPO agencies and municipalities conduct public participation activities related to MPO activities and their particular agency and program needs. For example, the MAPC regularly brings together representatives of the municipalities in each of eight subregions to foster communication and intermunicipal cooperation; they meet monthly to address transportation, land use, conservation, and environmental issues. MPO staff members frequently participate in these discussions to exchange information and gather input from the subregions. The MBTA conducts extensive outreach in the preparation of the Program for Mass Transportation and the Capital Investment Program, which are intrinsically connected to the Long-Range Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program. The MBTA also uses public participation in its design and construction projects. MassDOT conducts corridor and other studies, and sets up citizen advisory groups. Elected officials of MPO municipalities conduct outreach for transportation projects and issues. All the member agencies and municipalities engage in environmental review and/or planning activities that call for public processes. Some of these processes are extensive, involving citizen advisory committees, workshops, hearings, and other outreach activities. Members share information gathered through these processes with other MPO members. Agencies are encouraged to coordinate their outreach plans, when possible, with MPO workshops to consolidate public involvement activities.

FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION (FTA) PUBLIC HEARING REQUIREMENTS

The MBTA, the FTA Section 5307(c) applicant, has consulted with the MPO and concurs that the public involvement process adopted by the MPO for the development of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) satisfies the public hearing requirements that pertain to the development of the Program of Projects for regular Section 5307, Urbanized Area Formula Program, grant applications, including the provision for public notice and the time established for public review and comment.

For FTA projects that are not routine, i.e., Section 5307 applications that require an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement, the public involvement provided for herein for TIP review is not sufficient. Additional public involvement, as presented in the joint Federal Highway Administration/Federal Transit Administration (FHWA/FTA) environmental regulations, 23 CFR part 771, will be required for grant approval.

ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE MBTA (AACT)

AACT is a consumer organization composed primarily of people with disabilities, senior citizens, and representatives of human services agencies. It is an independent organization that works closely with the MBTA to ensure that the Boston region's transportation system is accessible, as well as safe and efficient, as guaranteed by the Americans with Disabilities Act. AACT provides a public forum for discussion of MPO issues and topics, including the certification documents during their development, and is invited to participate in the development, review, and comment processes for all certification documents. All AACT members receive notices and flyers in their regular monthly informational mailings. AACT officials and interested members are also sent notices through MPOinfo, and they often participate in MPO open houses or workshops.

The Massachusetts Commission for the Blind receives MPO notices and invitations to participate and frequently tapes this information for distribution to users of its services.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT FOR OTHER STUDIES AND REPORTS

Some planning studies and reports, such as corridor studies, call for special processes for working with affected communities and agencies. Programs for these studies are consistent with the MPO's public involvement principles.

APPENDIX A – The Boston Region MPO’s Regional Equity Program

The Boston Region MPO’s regional equity program is composed of three key elements: outreach, analysis, and integrating environmental justice into the planning process. The program’s outreach efforts are generally described on pages 5, 6, and 7. A more detailed description of the program’s outreach efforts, analysis, and integration of environmental justice into the planning process is presented below.

Outreach

Gathering Information

Gathering information about the transportation needs of minority and low-income populations is completed in one of three ways:

1. One-on-one interviews with community organizations are used to discuss transportation needs and burdens and facilitate participation. The MPO has learned that, in some cases, the people best positioned to speak about the transportation needs of environmental justice areas do not have the time and financial resources to travel to meetings in a central location or to participate in public forums. By visiting community representatives at their offices and facilitating one-on-one or small-group interviews, the MPO is able to obtain valuable information about the transportation needs of the area that inform the MPO during its transportation decision-making process. These discussions also provide opportunities to inform participants about the MPO and the metropolitan planning process.
2. Standardized surveys are also used to gather data for analysis and presentation to the MPO. Blank surveys are mailed to community contacts that are unable to schedule time for an interview.
3. The MPO staff also keeps track of forums and meetings planned by community organizations. When relevant, and as time permits, the staff attends these meetings to meet additional contacts, gather information, and provide input on questions specific to the MPO planning process as they arise. The MPO staff regularly attends the MBTA’s Rider Oversight Committee meetings and informs the committee of opportunities for input into the MPO’s planning process.

Summarizing Needs

Summaries of the information gathered and copies of the surveys, maps, and any other notes and information are compiled and presented in briefing books for review by the MPO and are made available to contacts and interested parties in environmental justice areas. Prior to its inclusion in the briefing book and reports to the MPO. The MPO staff interprets the needs identified by each community and classifies them as being related to the Long-Range Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, Unified Planning Work Program, service planning, or other planning processes.

Providing Feedback to Community Organizations

The MPO provides feedback to community organizations involved in the MPO regional equity process by providing a written summary, in draft form, of their discussions with MPO staff for their review, and by classifying the needs as being related to the Long-Range Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, Unified Planning Work Program, service planning, or other entity. Communication is ongoing, as the MPO staff keeps community organizations updated with information. If relevant, the MPO staff encourages community organization representatives to attend MBTA Rider Oversight Committee meetings to directly convey transit service issues to the MBTA and the committee. Notices of current and planned MPO activities (including MPO-sponsored meetings, open houses, workshops, or meetings sponsored by other agencies, if known) that are related to the community's needs are also sent to the organizations when relevant.

Analysis

For the MPO's Long-Range Transportation Plan, JOURNEY TO 2030, MPO staff performed a systemwide analysis on current conditions, the set of projects that were currently funded by the MPO, and the set of projects recommended in the plan. The analysis focused on mobility, accessibility, and emissions for communities with a high proportion of low-income and minority residents. The MPO is also able to fund studies on issues or topics identified through the MPO's environmental justice outreach process.

Integration with Planning Process

The MPO integrates environmental justice concerns into the planning process by encouraging and sharing input from its outreach efforts, by using environmental justice as a criterion in its planning documents, and by examining environmental justice issues in greater detail.

The MPO holds several open houses and workshops every year on various topics; these events include forums for discussing certification documents and UPWP studies. Environmental justice contacts are encouraged to attend and to provide input at each of these events. The MPO also holds periodic meetings that focus on environmental justice, and gives presentations on its regional equity program whenever requested to by a community organization. Environmental justice contacts are notified of public review periods and are encouraged to provide input. The MPO staff summarizes input from these events and distributes it to MPO members.

The potential impact of a proposed project in environmental justice areas is a criterion in the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) project-ranking processes. The MPO staff gives projects that are estimated to benefit environmental justice areas positive ratings and projects that may burden these areas negative ratings. The MPO considers these ratings when deciding what projects should be listed in the LRTP or TIP, and which should receive funding.

APPENDIX B – Minority Representation on Decision-Making and Advisory Bodies

The Boston Region MPO Memorandum of Understanding stipulates MPO member entities. Eight of them are permanent: City of Boston, Executive Office of Transportation, MBTA, MassHighway, MassPike, Massport, MBTA Advisory Board, and MAPC. Six municipalities (three cities and three towns) are elected to three-year terms by the 101 municipalities in the MPO region in an election coordinated by MAPC and the MBTA Advisory Board. MPO member designees are charged with the responsibility of communicating the transportation needs of their minority constituents to the full MPO. Currently, four of the seven municipalities on the MPO include communities with identified regional equity/environmental justice areas: Boston, Somerville, Framingham, and Salem.

There are several advisory boards to the MPO. The Regional Transportation Advisory Council is an independent body that provides advice and input to the MPO. The Advisory Council determines its own membership. Currently, there are several municipalities on the Council that contain an environmental justice area: the MPO municipalities (Boston, Somerville, Framingham, and Salem), as well as Cambridge, Revere, Everett, and Quincy. In addition, the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs is a member and has selected its environmental justice manager to be its representative on the Advisory Council.

There are three policy advisory boards for the MBTA. The MBTA Board of Directors is the governing body that manages the MBTA, and was created by the MBTA enabling statute, Massachusetts General Laws, c. 161A. The members of the Board serve two-year staggered terms, and are appointed by the Governor of the Commonwealth.

The MBTA Advisory Board is also a creation of the MBTA's enabling legislation and is composed of 175 members. The mission is to provide public oversight of the MBTA as well as technical assistance and information on behalf of the 175 members of the Advisory Board and the transit-riding public. The 175 cities and towns served by the MBTA are represented by the local Chief Elected Officials of those communities, who are chosen by voters in municipal elections.

The MBTA Rider Oversight Committee grew out of the MBTA's public discussions of fare policy, and is composed of eight members representing various advocacy groups, eight senior MBTA managers, eight public members, and three public alternate members. The public members were originally selected by the other 16 members from over 400 applicants. As new members continue to be added to replace departing members, the committee will seek to maintain a diverse membership representative of the MBTA's ridership.

The Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA (AACT) is a consumer advocacy organization composed primarily of people with disabilities, senior citizens, and representatives of human services agencies. Working closely with the MBTA, AACT strives to ensure that the transportation system of the Boston region is accessible, in addition to being safe and efficient, as guaranteed by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

APPENDIX C – Contacts in the Regional Equity Program

Organization

Alliance of Boston Neighborhoods
Allston-Brighton Area Planning Action Council
Allston-Brighton CDC
Allston-Brighton Healthy Boston Coalition
Alternatives for Community & Environment
Asian American Civic Association, Inc.
Asian CDC
Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center
Brazilian American Association (BRAMAS)
Cambridge Community Development Department
Cambridge Community Services
Chelsea Green Space and Recreation Committee (aka Chelsea [Human Services] Collaborative)
Chelsea Neighborhood Housing Services, Inc.
City of Revere, Community Development Department
Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation
Committee for Boston Public Housing
Community Action Agency Of Somerville
Community Action Programs Inter-City, Inc.
Community Minority Cultural Center (CMCC)
Dorchester Bay EDC
Dorchester Neighborhood Service Center
Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative
East Boston Ecumenical Community Council (EBECC)
Eight Streets Neighborhood Association
Fenway CDC
Fenway Civic Association
Fields Corner CDC
Four Corners Action Coalition
Framingham Community Partners
Healthy Malden
Inquilinos Boricuas En Acción
Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation
Just-A-Start
La Alianza Hispana
Lynn Economic Opportunity, Inc.
Madison Park Development Corporation
Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board
Mattapan CDC
Mattapan Family Service Center
Medford Health Matters
Mission Hill Neighborhood Housing Services

Neighborhood of Affordable Housing
Nuestra Comunidad Development Corporation
Parker Hill Fenway Neighborhood Service Center
Quincy Asian Resources. Inc. (QARI)
Quincy Community Action Programs
Roca, Inc.
Roslindale Village Main Street
Salem Harbor CDC
Somerville Community Corporation
Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership (STEP)
South Middlesex Opportunity Council
Southwest Boston CDC
The Chinatown Coalition
Urban Edge
Viet-AID
Waltham Alliance to Create Housing
Women's Institute for Housing and Economic Development