



TRANS REPORT

FEBRUARY 2008

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE BOSTON REGION METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

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MEETING CALENDAR

For the most recent information on the following public meetings and others that may have been scheduled after TRANSREPORT went to press, go to www.bostonmpo.org or call (617) 973-7119. A photo ID is required to access most meeting sites.

AT THE STATE TRANSPORTATION BUILDING, 10 PARK PLAZA, BOSTON

February 21 (Thursday)

Boston Region MPO Transportation Planning and Programming Committee. Conference Room 4. 10:00 AM

February 25 (Monday)

MBTA Rider Oversight Committee. Conference Rooms 1, 2, and 3. 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM

February 26 (Tuesday)

Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA. Conference Room 4. 1:00 PM

March 6 (Thursday)

Boston Region MPO Transportation Planning and Programming Committee. Conference Room 4. 10:00 AM

AT OTHER BOSTON AREA LOCATIONS

February 13 (Wednesday)

Boston Region MPO Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) "How To" Seminar. Framingham Town Hall, Blumer Room, 150 Concord Street. 9:00 AM

Calendar continued on p. 2

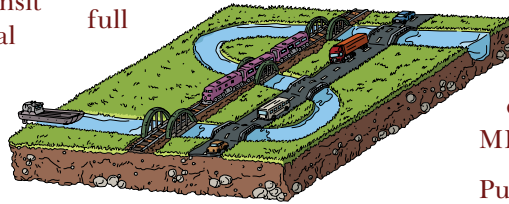
Congress Approves Transportation Funds; State Bond Bill Hearings Begin

The U.S. Congress approved an omnibus appropriations bill on December 26, a \$555 billion bill that includes \$40.2 billion for highway transportation programs and nearly \$9.5 billion for transit programs for federal fiscal year (FFY) 2008.

Federal funding for highways has increased by \$1.1 billion from FFY 2007 and meets the level of funding authorized under federal transportation legislation. Transit funding, though higher this year than last, is below the authorized funding level.

The bill earmarked nearly \$36.5 million for transportation projects in Massachusetts.

For the Commonwealth to access the full



suite of federal funds for eligible transportation projects, the state must have a transportation bond bill or another funding mechanism that assures the Federal Highway Administration and Federal

Transit Administration that the state can provide the appropriate matching funds for projects included in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program, which is a compilation of all the Transportation Improvement Programs developed by the state's 13 MPOs.

Public hearings began at the State House in late January on a state bond bill, filed by Governor Deval Patrick last November, that would provide enough funding for the Commonwealth to tap into

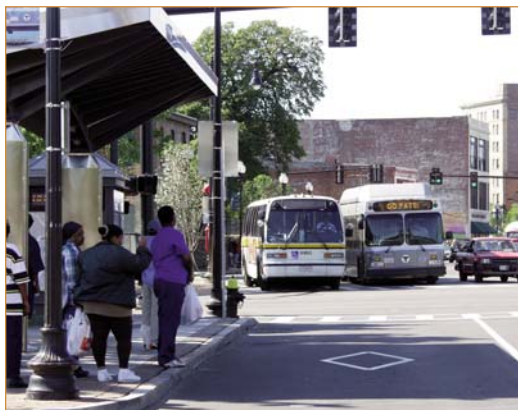
• [Bond Bill cont. on p. 4](#)

Regional Equity Outreach Underway

MPO TO MEET WITH ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMUNITIES

This month the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

will begin another phase of its outreach in communities in the region with substantial populations of minority and low-income residents to better assess their transportation needs and concerns, and



to encourage long-term involvement of these communities in the MPO's transportation planning process.

This outreach follows on previous MPO work that identified

concerns that some residents of these communities have about the transportation system and its impact on their neighborhoods. Many of these residents are dependent on public transportation, and some face language and cultural barriers that present problems for using the system.

The MPO's Regional Equity Program is focused on identifying transportation issues in environmental justice areas, which are defined by the MPO as areas that con-

• [Outreach cont. on p. 4](#)

The members of the Boston Region MPO: Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works, Cities of Boston, Newton, Salem, and Somerville, Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority Advisory Board, Massachusetts Highway Department, Massachusetts Port Authority, Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Regional Transportation Advisory Council, Towns of Bedford, Framingham, and Hopkinton

Fairmount Line Project Moves Forward with Bridge Replacements

WORK BEGUN ON QUINCY STREET AND MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE BRIDGES

The MBTA further advanced its Fairmount Line Improvement Project with the start of a \$22.8 million, multiyear construction project in January to replace the Quincy Street and Massachusetts Avenue commuter rail bridges on that line.

Work on the two bridges, located on each side of Uphams Corner Station in Dorchester (see map), will require one-track operation at that station. Passengers will be redirected to opposite platforms for inbound and outbound service at various stages of the project until its

completion, which is slated for the summer of 2010.

The two bridges are funded under the MBTA's State of Good Repair Program, which is included in the Boston Region MPO's Transportation Improvement Program.

Other components of the Fairmount Line Improvement Project include four additional bridge replacements along the line, the modernization of Morton Street and Uphams Corner stations (which has been completed), the addition of four new stations in the Four Corners area of Dorchester (currently included in the anticipated revision of the State Implementation Plan), and the installation of an interlocking signal system.



The Quincy Street and Massachusetts Avenue bridges on the Fairmount commuter rail line will be replaced.

Boston Plans to Improve Bicycling Infrastructure

MAYOR ANNOUNCES PLANS TO ADD BICYCLE LANES TO CITY STREETS

Boston Mayor Thomas Menino announced a new initiative aimed at improving the bicycling infrastructure in Boston in his State of the City Address on January 15.

Transforming Boston into a bicycle-friendly city will help reduce the city's carbon footprint, the Mayor said, as he described steps the city is taking to become more environmentally sustainable.

"We are going to improve Boston's cycling infrastruc-

ture starting with new bike lanes on Commonwealth Avenue, between Kenmore Square and the BU Bridge. This is



City of Boston, Mayor Thomas M. Menino

one of the busiest cycling corridors in Boston, with thousands of people commuting by bike every day,"

he said. The restriping of this section of Commonwealth Avenue is planned for the spring.

The addition of bicycle lanes is also part of another project the city is funding this year—safety improvements at the intersection of the American Legion Highway and Walk Hill Street in Roslindale. Nearly 100 motor vehicle crashes occurred there over the past four years.

City planners will be evaluating other roadways in the city that could be improved to better accommodate bicycle traffic. There are about 40 miles of roadway with the

Calendar cont. from p. 1

Regional Transportation Advisory Council Freight Committee. Quincy City Hall, 1305 Hancock Street. 1:00 PM

Regional Transportation Advisory Council. Quincy City Hall, 1305 Hancock Street. 3:00 PM

February 15 (Friday)

Move Massachusetts Membership Meeting and Progress Report on Silver Line Phase III. Brown Rudnick, One Financial Center, 18th Floor, Boston. 8:10 AM to 9:30 AM. RSVP at movemass@usa.net.

Massachusetts Office of Disability Emergency Preparedness Meeting. Symphony Plaza East Building, 334 Massachusetts Avenue, Basement Level A, Boston. 12:00 PM to 3:00 PM. RSVP by February 8 to Jeffrey Dougan at (800) 322-2020, ext. 27316.

February 19 (Tuesday)

Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works and MBTA: Green Line Extension Project Open House and Workshop. Cummings School Gymnasium, 93 School Street, Somerville. Open House 6:00 PM to 6:30 PM, Workshop 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM

February 25 Monday

Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works: Route 39 Corridor Improvements. Aggasiz School, 20 Child Street, Jamaica Plain. 6:00 PM to 7:30 PM.

February 27 (Wednesday)

Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works and MBTA: Green Line Extension Project Public Meeting. Century Bank Community Room, 400 Mystic Avenue, Medford. 6:30 PM

March 6 (Thursday)

WalkBoston Downtown Development Walk. Meet at the main entrance of South Station. 4:00 PM. RSVP by February 21 at (617) 367-9255 or info@walkboston.org.

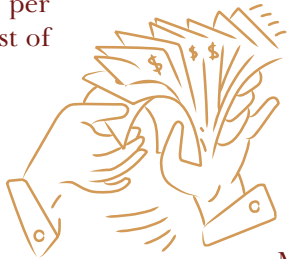
WalkBoston Annual Reception, Celebration, and Golden Shoe Awards. WilmerHale, 60 State Street, 26th Floor, Boston. 5:30 PM to 8:00 PM

potential for bicycle infrastructure improvements.

New Tax Breaks for Transit and Vanpool Commuters

Uncle Sam is increasing incentives in 2008 for people who use transit or vanpools to commute to work.

Employers may now underwrite up to \$115 per month of the cost of each eligible employee's commute and off-set qualified parking expenses up to \$200 per employee per month. Both parties benefit at tax time. Employ-



ees are not taxed on the benefit they receive and employers may write off the cost.

Employers may also allow their employees to set aside money for transit passes, vanpool expenses, and qualified parking expenses.

For more information, contact MassRIDES at 1-888-4COMMUTE.

The Boston Region MPO marks with sorrow the passing of its long-time member, Gordon Feltman, designee of the Town of Bedford. Mr. Feltman had served on the MPO since the town was first elected to the MPO in 1999. He worked energetically on many issues, including improving transit services in suburban areas, expanding the use of objective criteria for the evaluation of projects for the Transportation Improvement Program, and implementing state-of-the-practice initiatives for public participation. Recently he was vice president of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) and an active member of its Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination. Mr. Feltman passed away on January 29. The MPO recognizes with gratitude his many contributions to the region. He will be greatly missed.



Boston Region MPO Activities

BOSTON REGION MPO ACTION ITEMS

In January, the Boston Region MPO's Transportation Planning and Programming Committee sent letters to Massachusetts state legislators representing districts in the MPO's region, the Speaker of the House, the Senate President, and chairs of the Joint Committee on Transportation to request their support and leadership in passing the state transportation bond bill (House 4409). The timely passage of this bill would allow the Commonwealth to access nearly two billion dollars in federal funding for the state's transportation projects that are scheduled for federal fiscal years 2008 through 2011 (see the article on page 1). The Committee also authorized the MPO's staff to begin two work programs that will provide estimates of passenger-miles and boardings for the MBTA's rail and bus systems (both directly operated and purchased services). The MPO conducts this work for the MBTA annually.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL UPDATE

Vineet Gupta, of the City of Boston Transportation Department, gave a presentation on the \$55 million economic stimulus bill passed by the state Legislature in 2006 to improve public right-of-way and transit in the Fenway, Longwood medical, and Kenmore Square sections of Boston. Building on existing studies and designs for the area, the bill aims to relieve traffic congestion in the area, to

improve pedestrian safety and mobility, and to provide greater economic opportunity. It includes funding for the Fenway/Longwood/ Kenmore Transportation and Pedestrian Action Plan.

The Advisory Council began discussing the nature and appropriate role of illustrative projects in regional transportation planning. The conversation will continue at the February 13 Advisory Council meeting, which will be held at Quincy City Hall (see calendar for details).

ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE MBTA (AACT) UPDATE

The MBTA's Office for Transportation Access (OTA) stated that customers of THE RIDE are eligible to use in-state and out-of-state paratransit services. According to the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations, a paratransit user may travel as a visitor outside the MBTA's service area for up to 21 days in a 12-month period. Travel exceeding 21 days may require the customer to apply for certification through the agency serving the region the

customer is visiting. OTA can provide customers with proof of MBTA ADA paratransit eligibility, upon request.

For information on paratransit services provided by other Massachusetts regional transit authorities, call the Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works at (617) 973-7000 (Voice) or (617) 973-7306 (TTY), or visit www.eot.state.ma.us and click on the "Regional Transit" button on that page.

Service availability, hours of service, fares, and policies vary between RTAs.

Regional Equity

• Outreach *cont. from p. 1*

tain a traffic analysis zone (TAZ)—a geographical area used for transportation planning purposes—with more than 200 minority residents that meets at least one of the following criteria: (1) has a population whose median household income is at or below 60 percent of the regional median household income, and/or (2) has a population that is over 50 percent minority.

Twenty-eight areas in the region (each containing a single TAZ or groups of TAZs) meet this definition.

Between February and this summer, the MPO plans to continue its outreach program by meeting with social service and community-based organizations, such as community development corporations, that serve the 28 designated areas.

For more information, contact Annette Demchur, Regional Equity Project Manager, at (617) 973-7140 or annetted@ctps.org.

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization
State Transportation Building
10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150
Boston, MA 02116

Bond Bill Before Legislature

• Bond Bill *cont. from p. 1*

federal funds. It would authorize the state to borrow \$2.9 billion for transportation infrastructure improvements and would leverage federal funding

to provide a total investment of approximately \$4.8 billion in the state's transportation system over the next three years.

Prior to the start of the public hearings, the Boston Region MPO's Transportation Planning and Programming Committee asked legislators representing districts in the MPO region, the

Speaker of the House, the Senate President, and chairs of the Joint Committee on

Transportation, and legislators representing districts in the MPO region to support the bond bill.



MPO members conveyed the message that the timely passage of the bond bill is necessary for work to begin on federally funded projects scheduled for FFYs 2008 through 2011. The MPO also advised the legislators that long-term revenue shortfalls need to be addressed.

TRANSREPORT

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