

Draft Memorandum for the Record Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee Meeting Summary

March 28, 2024, Meeting

1:00 PM–3:00 PM, Zoom Video Conferencing Platform

Jen Rowe, Chair, representing Mayor Michelle Wu, City of Boston and the Boston Transportation Department (BTD)

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

See attendance on pages 9–12.

2. Public Comments

Jim Nee (MetroWest Regional Transit Authority [MWRTA]) expressed support for the MWRTA Equitable Hub redesign and the Transit Transformation Low Emissions Bus Procurement project. These projects are important to lower the carbon footprint of the MWRTA.

State Representative Michael Soter spoke on behalf of the Town of Bellingham, sharing a project proposal for the Interstate 495 interchange. M. Soter expressed hope that the project would be a high priority due to degradation of the streets and infrastructure and asked the committee to help fix it as soon as possible.

Kristina Johnson, Town of Hudson, advocated for the Central Mass Rail Trail. The project has received substantial funding from a local community preservation committee. K. Johnson asked the committee to strongly consider this project for the design project pilot funding.

Marian Neutra, Town of Sherborn, advocated for funding for the improvement of Routes 27 and 16. Routes 27 and 16 briefly run close together in Sherborn, creating significant congestion. The application is for a complete redesign of the town center. This would allow for easier access to the town center, reduced congestion, and increased safety measures.

Jesse Riedle, Town of Bellingham, expressed support for the project proposal for the Interstate 495 interchange. John Morgan, CHA Consulting, reiterated the importance of

the project due to improvements for those traveling through the region. J. Morgan also shared information regarding the timeline of the design.

Travis Ahern, Town of Holliston, spoke about a design project for Route 16. The project aimed to improve heavy industrial and freight traffic that was causing congestion in the area. In addition, the proposed Rail Trail would run through this area, resulting in increased pedestrian traffic.

3. Recap of TIP Scenarios from March 21st MPO Meeting—*Ethan Lapointe, MPO Staff*

Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

1. Scenario Parameters ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))
2. Scenario Three Project Adjustments ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

Ethan Lapointe, MPO staff, recapped recent MPO board and TIP Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee meetings and a discussion of the project changes for FFY 2027. E. Lapointe shared that initially this meeting was to include a discussion about an amendment to the FFYs 2024–28 TIP that addressed the City of Newton’s difficulties with its micro transit services, but more significant changes needed to be made, which means the city will be unable to qualify for funding. The \$210,000 is already accounted for in proposed scenarios for this TIP.

E. Lapointe reviewed committee meetings, beginning with the first meeting on October 18, 2023. This meeting noted a decreasing trend in applications for TIP projects. The MPO’s major capital projects would potentially impact not only the ability to fund new projects, but also impact the ability to maintain funding and support for projects over time. During the second meeting, on December 14, 2023, members discussed the decline of applications, the Community Connections Program, and the decline in project readiness. Most of the projects funded in FFYs 2025–26 were delayed into 2027–28, causing a deficit and spurring the creation of the committee.

The March 14, 2024, meeting focused on mitigating the deficit in FFYs 2027–28 and utilizing unspent funds in FFYs 2025–26. During the March 21, 2024, MPO board meeting, the MPO board could not agree on how to address the deficit. The MPO board discussed the following options:

- Temporarily deprogramming projects from the FFY 2026 or FFY 2027 TIP
- Delaying projects into FFY 2029

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- Taking projects that are currently using Advanced Construction or are funded across multiple years, and reducing their Advanced Construction

The committee asked for the following information: recent milestones attained in the design and submissions to MassDOT, the upcoming milestones and steps taken to reach the proposed readiness year, how old the current cost estimate is, and if the scope of work has changed.

The first two scenarios that are under consideration are 3A1 and 3A2, regarding Somerville McGrath Boulevard Construction and the Chelsea Broadway project, which have similar purposes. Tom Bent, Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville), stated that MassDOT had held a project information meeting on February 24, 2024, and that MassDOT anticipated achieving 25 percent design by late 2024.

E. Lapointe stated that the Chelsea project being discussed in this scenario had only recently been picked up by the MPO and had had less notice of potentially being deprogrammed than Somerville or MassDOT. In addition, committee members would not be voting to take any actions at this time, although members may make a recommendation to limit the number of scenarios being presented to the MPO board for consideration.

The next scenario is Scenario 3B, which concerns the Cambridge Street Bridge Preservation project in Boston. J. Rowe called on Benjamin Sun, City of Boston, to discuss this project. The Cambridge Street Bridge is a city-owned structure, and the original vision was to have the project implemented by the city, and the preservation design was at 100 percent. The project was then programmed into the TIP and adjusted to comply with MassDOT design protocol and standards. The repair portion is 100 percent complete, and the design percentages (25–100 percent) are planned to be submitted through 2026, with the final submission in January 2027. The latest cost estimate was created two years ago, but has been recently calibrated by a similar project, coming to \$16 million.

Next was Scenario 3C, which involves the Beacham Street project in Everett and the Central and South Main Street project in Ipswich. E. Lapointe asked if anyone from Everett or Ipswich would like to speak.

Stephen Crane, Town of Ipswich, spoke about how the Central and South Main Street project addresses a complicated and important intersection. The design is at 25 percent and moving forward as planned.

Jay Monty, City of Everett, explained that Beacham Street is one of the critical freight corridors and is in critical need of reconstruction and repair, and that the 25 percent design plan is about to be finished. Rich Benevento, Tighe & Bond, also agreed that the design was well underway and in fact could come in ahead of schedule.

Next was Scenario 3D, which refers to Weston's Route 30 Reconstruction Project, which is a municipal project that has some connections into Statewide Highway funded projects. Laurie Bent, Town of Weston, said that the project is at 25 percent design and residents and the Town of Weston Select Board are in favor of this project. Tom Cullen, Town of Weston, stated that the 75 percent design would be ready by the end of 2024. T. Cullen also spoke about changes to the scope of the project.

The next scenario was Scenario 3E, which referenced Intersection Improvements at Woburn Common. John Cashell, City of Woburn, spoke about how the project has been delayed due to other projects. The 25 percent design stage has not been reached yet, but J. Cashell strongly requested that this project not be deprogrammed and restated Woburn's commitment to the project. R. Benevento discussed the project's readiness and what planning steps the city has already taken to move the project forward, including several public hearings.

The last scenario is Scenario 3X, which references Salem's Boston Street Project. Based on recommendations from the MPO board, this scenario is not possible because moving the timeline forward to 2029 would incur inflation costs that exceed the project's funding. The project is already at 75 percent design. Deb Duhamel, City of Salem, stated that this project is a top priority for the City of Salem and the right-of-way work is planned to begin in October 2024, with completion projected to July 2025.

E. Lapointe then shared some pre-discussion points. The committee was asked to recommend one scenario, or two if a decision could not be made, and consider some projects for "probationary" status.

Discussion

Eric Bourassa, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, asked for clarification about Somerville's McGrath Boulevard Construction in Scenario 3A2, specifically regarding a complication that decreasing the budget would hinder the delivery of the project on schedule.

E. Lapointe responded that a reduction in funding in FFY 2027 would mean the city could not do the level of work intended in FFY 2027. The reduction in funding could also

hinder a federal discretionary grant application that was made by the city, citing the original funding number.

E. Bourassa asked for additional information on the City of Chelsea project that is part of scenarios 3A1 and 3A2. E. Lapointe stated this project was new and had not been discussed yet. It is a Complete Streets project for Broadway, originally in the FFYs 2021–25 TIP, now recommended for delay. J. Bechard stated that this project had caused some difficulties for MassDOT.

E. Bourassa asked what would happen if Scenario 3B was enacted, and the possible disruptions it could cause.

B. Sun stated that because the Cambridge Street Bridge is within a busy area, surrounded by many different structures, stations, and roads, the project was proposed as a TIP project to coordinate among the many entities that manage the various surroundings. B. Sun stated the impact of the project would be very significant across roadways and public transit.

John Alessi, Town of Arlington, stated he was uncomfortable with Scenarios 3A1 and 3A2 due to the potential impacts. J. Alessi asked what impacts these delayed projects would have on FFY 2029 programming and how it would affect new projects in the same fiscal year.

E. Lapointe stated that if projects were delayed to FFY 2029 there would not be adequate funding for new projects during that year. E. Lapointe also stated that if the funding issues could not be resolved this year, then these issues would extend into FFY 2030 and beyond.

E. Bourassa asked about Scenario 3D, and for specifics of the scope change.

L. Bent stated that some abutters are opposed to the Weston project, but many more are in support. L. Bent stated most of the changes were made to ensure compliance with MassDOT for shared paths and will require extra funding.

Leon Gaumont, Town of Weston, agreed that there was some opposition, but spoke on how important the shared path would be for the town and interregional connection.

E. Bourassa asked about Scenario 3E, specifically about lack of readiness, and noted a point in the shared documents that suggests the Intersection Improvement project might not be ready for FFY 2029.

R. Benevento responded that the project was not ready, and it could be pushed further out in the timeline to FFY 2029. R. Benevento stated that most of the preliminary work had been done.

E. Bourassa highlighted a point in Scenario 3E stating that the estimate for the Intersection Improvements at Woburn Common project was old and might not reflect an FFY 2029 estimate. E. Bourassa stated that this project seemed to be the least ready, and Scenario 3E might be the easiest to implement.

J. Bechard asked R. Benevento for clarification on the readiness of the Intersection Improvements at Woburn Common project.

R. Benevento responded that the current timeline was 25 percent design by November 2023 and 75 percent design by October 2025, and noted it was an aggressive schedule.

Trish Domigan, VHB, asked about Scenario 3X and the available funding for FFY 2026. T. Domigan stated that the City of Salem's Boston Street project will be ready in FFY 2025 at the end of the calendar year and noted that work was being done to resolve the right-of-way issue. T. Domigan stated that deferring the project could impact the process. T. Domigan asked if the project was underway during FFY 2026 and how that would impact the FFY 2027 budget.

E. Lapointe responded with an explanation of the funding that was available, and where the funding had ended up being distributed, and why it was impacting these projects.

Dennis Giombetti, MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham), asked about Scenario 3E, and the abutters that opposed the project. T. Cullen stated there were easements for those properties and that the problems did not seem insurmountable, citing a town center project where easements had been quickly attained.

J. Rowe then asked for the members to begin proposing preferred scenarios.

E. Bourassa suggested Scenario 3E. E. Lapointe restated the potential outcomes of this scenario, referencing the shared document. J. Alessi stated that a condition should be added to this recommendation, that the committee would revisit the Weston project based on the results of the town meeting vote and the changes to the project scope, which could inform a decision on the Argilla Road project in Ipswich.

T. Bent expressed support for Scenario 3E based on project readiness and lesser impacts. John Romano, MassDOT, agreed with the recommendation of Scenario 3E but stated that a revised cost estimate would almost certainly be much higher than the current estimate, which would have a large impact on the FFY 2029 TIP. J. Romano asked if it was possible for the project funding to be split between FFY 2029 and 2030.

E. Lapointe responded that there was precedent for originally funding the project in one fiscal year and funding the cost increase in the next fiscal year. E. Lapointe also stated that FFY 2030 would likely not have a funding surplus.

S. Crane stated that the Argilla Road project was in an active preliminary design stage.

J. Rowe referenced a point on the shared document that asked the committee to consider putting some projects on a “probationary” status, giving advance warning to municipalities that if projects do not advance in a notable way, those projects could be deprogrammed.

E. Bourassa stated that there would need to be some kind of measurement for project advancement.

D. Giombetti responded that the measurement could be specific goals that the project would need to achieve within a specific timeframe, to show advancement.

J. Alessi stated that clear goals and achievements would allow the committee to fairly assess projects.

J. Monty supported the idea of using MassDOT’s standard for reviews of projects for this assessment.

Eric Johnson, City of Framingham, stated he could pass this idea for assessment to the City’s Highway Division. E. Johnson also stated that according to federal standards, funding should be allocated based on the construction schedule.

J. Rowe then stated that based on the discussion, the committee would be recommending Scenario 3E and discussing ways to assess the progress of projects in a fair way going forward.

J. Alessi stated that another item to bring to the board was the cost increase of the Woburn project.

L. Diggins stated that the cost will go up for almost every project as FFY 2029 approaches.

R. Benevento asked the committee to also be mindful of how cost estimates become more refined with every design percentage submission.

E. Lapointe then asked if anyone would like to make statements about their TIP projects.

Zack McKeever, Metacomet Greenway Association, stated support for the Metacomet Greenway project to be considered in the 2025 project design pilot. Z. McKeever discussed the specifics of the project and the nonprofit organization that supports it. Richard McCarthy, Town of Norfolk, discussed the municipality collaboration that supports this project.

Sheila Page, Town of Lexington, advocated for the Route 4 to Interstate 95 interchange design. S. Page discussed the importance of this project and some of its scope.

4. Presentation on Final Scenario Elements—*Ethan Lapointe, MPO Staff*

This item was not discussed in consideration of time.

5. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by the MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the Inner Core Committee (Town of Somerville) (T. Bent). The motion carried.

Attendance

Members

Representatives and Alternates

City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	Jen Rowe
Inner Core Committee (Town of Somerville)	Tom Bent
	John Bechard
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	Derek Krevat
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
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Lenard Diggins
Town of Arlington	John Alessi
Town of Brookline	Erin Chute

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Felicia Webb	Cape Ann Transportation Authority
Andrew Valcovic	CHA Consulting, Inc.
John Morgan	CHA Consulting, Inc.
Ben Sun	City of Boston
Jay Monty	City of Everett
Sarkis Sarkisian	City of Framingham
Eric Johnson	City of Framingham
Jack Witthaus	City of Malden
Deb Duhamel	City of Salem
Sarah Cahill	City of Salem
Zeke Mermell	City of Watertown
John Cashell	City of Woburn
Chuck Adelsberger	Environmental Partners Group, Inc.
Bridget Myers	HSH
Mark Gravalles	HSH
Julia Waller	MAPC
Travis Pollack	MAPC
Mike Soter	Massachusetts House of Representatives
Sarah Lee	Massachusetts Port Authority
Benjamin Muller	MassDOT
Chris Klem	MassDOT
John Romano	MassDOT
Raissah Kouame	MassDOT
Sandy Johnston	MBTA
Anne and Ken McKee	Metacomet Greenway Association
Ryan Norton	Metacomet Greenway Association
Zack McKeever	Metacomet Greenway Association
Joy Glynn	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority
Cam Sullivan	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority
Jim Nee	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority
Tyler Terrasi	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority
Steven Olanoff	Three Rivers Interlocal Council
Rich Benevento	Tighe & Bond
Amy Sutherland	Town of Bellingham
Jesse Riedle	Town of Bellingham
Robert Walker	Town of Holliston
Sean Reese	Town of Holliston

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Travis Ahern	Town of Holliston
Kristina Johnson	Town of Hudson
Pam Helinek	Town of Hudson
Tom Green	Town of Hudson
Frank Ventimiglia	Town of Ipswich
Stephen Crane	Town of Ipswich
Sheila Page	Town of Lexington
Ned Codd	Town of Newton
David Turi	Town of Norfolk
Richard McCarthy	Town of Norfolk
Gil Hilario	Town of North Attleboro
Marie Clarner	Town of North Attleboro
Addie Mae Weiss	Town of Sherborn
Heidi Doyle	Town of Sherborn
Jeremy Marsette	Town of Sherborn
Marian Neutra	Town of Sherborn
Sean Killeen	Town of Sherborn
Marcia Rasmussen	Town of Sudbury
Gary Riggott	Town of Walpole
Sandhya Malur	Town of Walpole
Jason Lavoie	Town of Weston
Laurie Bent	Town of Weston
Leon Gaumond	Town of Weston
Tom Cullen	Town of Weston
Paul Arvidson	Town of Wrentham
Trish Domigan	Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.
Alfredo	
Bob Cote	
Jeffrey Plympton	
Steve Schwarm	

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

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Abby Cutrumbes

Annette Demchur

Dave Hong

Erin Maguire

Ethan Lapointe

Judy Day

Srilekha Murthy

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