

TRANSREPORT

TRANSPORTATION NEWS FROM THE BOSTON REGION METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

MPO Steps Up Its Bicycle/Pedestrian Activities

Spring is in the air, not only outdoors but also at the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization, as the staff prepares to resume the MPO's popular Walkable Community Workshops program and to launch a new bicycle/pedestrian study.

Creating a better environment for walking is an important aspect of improving community livability, which in turn is related to the community's economic vitality. Both the physical health of individuals—people walk more when the environment is safe and pleasant—and the economic health of the community benefit.

A Walkable Community Workshop starts with a presentation on techniques that make a community more walkable. Participants then go out and look at a site in their community. In the final portion of the program, attendees discuss what was viewed on the walk and ways to implement possible improvements.

The workshops, which last approximately two and a half hours, are open to all those with an interest in improving walkability: elected officials, residents, and professionals in the fields of planning, engineering, law enforcement, and education.

To date, MPO staff have held Walkable Community Workshops in Arlington, Belmont, Maynard, Rockport, Saugus, Scituate, Wellesley, and Wrentham. For more information, please call Cathy Lewis at (617) 973-7118 or Jonathan Church at

(617) 973-7090, or e-mail walkable@ctps.org.



Paul Dudley White Bike Path

Work is also getting underway on the Bicycle/Pedestrian Improvements in Town Centers study, which is expected to be completed in the fall. The recently approved work program for the study reflects the MPO's goal of improving nonmotorized access,

both in suburban corridors and in town centers.

The study team will examine up to six town centers in the MPO region where walking or bicycling is a difficult, uncomfortable, or unsafe activity, and will recommend specific strategies for improving pedestrian and bicycle access and safety.

The site-selection process will focus on small towns that have not yet hosted a Walkable Community Workshop. The study team will work with local officials from the selected communities to explore options for potential improvements, such as modifying traffic signals, enhancing sight distances and lighting, and adding bike lanes, sidewalks, crosswalks, street furniture, bicycle parking, and signage.

The findings from the study will be available in a final report, which will provide a menu of options for implementing improvements. It is expected that the recommendations will also be useful to other MPO municipalities seeking to enhance bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Reminder to MPO Cities and Towns

Nomination papers for the MPO election to be held in May are due on May 3. For more information about the election process, click on the MPO Election button on our Web site at www.bostonmpo.org.

TRANSREPORT will publish statements from candidates in its May issue. To reserve space, contact Mary Ellen Sullivan at (617) 973-7119 or mesullivan@bostonmpo.org by April 10.

Mapping Mobility: Peak Spreading on Regional Express Highways

Most commuters know that congestion on our express highways has increased over the last two decades. National statistics show that the amount of lost productivity for the American worker stuck in traffic equals 440 hours every year, or the equivalent of 11 work weeks.

To better understand this trend, MPO staff analyzed the phenomenon of increasingly long peak periods of congestion—known as peak spreading—in the Boston region. The analysis included an examination of express highway hours of congestion and how they have changed since the late 1980s. The maps on page 3

■ Mapping Mobility *cont. on p. 3*

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TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE ACTION ITEMS

The Boston Region MPO's Transportation Planning and Programming Committee has given the go-ahead for MPO staff to begin two new work programs: the Bicycle/Pedestrian Improvements in Town Centers study (see the related article on page 1) and the Route 2/Route 16 (Alewife Brook Parkway) Eastbound: Traffic Patterns and MBTA Alewife Station Parking Garage Survey. In addition, the committee approved the report *I-93/Southeast Expressway/Route 3 (Braintree Split): Operational Assessment and Potential Improvements*, which will be the subject of a featured article in the May issue of *TRANSREPORT*.

Other March MPO activities included the third open house held for JOURNEY TO 2030, the MPO's long-range transportation plan, with presentations on regional equity and first-round travel modeling results.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL UPDATE

At their March meeting, Advisory Council members were briefed on four topics: a publication in the Federal Register of January 16, 2006, entitled *National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Particulate Matter*; a citizen's perspective on the impacts of transportation on air quality and public health; proposed improvements to the intersection of Routes 126 and 135 and the CSX railroad crossing in Framingham; and a proposed amendment to the MPO's current Transportation Improvement Program.

In April the Council is tentatively scheduled to hear presentations on a comprehensive diesel strategy being developed by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and the recently approved report on the Braintree Split. See page 4 for details on this meeting and on the April meeting of the Freight Committee.

AACT Chair Sets Agenda for Upcoming Year



Philip J. Beaulieu, the recently elected chairman of the Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA (AACT), has clear goals for this 200-member consumer

organization, whose mission is to work closely with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) to ensure that its system is accessible, in addition to being safe and efficient.

He is looking forward to AACT's participation in improving THE RIDE (the MBTA's paratransit program) and MBTA fixed-route services. AACT will also be involved in the development of accessibility plans and vehicle procurements. In addition, there will be more presentations at meetings on projects under design. Furthermore, Mr. Beaulieu would like to increase AACT membership to get more people participating in accessible transportation issues.

He is pleased with the progress made by the MBTA in providing for the needs of people with disabilities and notes that the MBTA has improved the service of THE RIDE, a fact which is measurable by the reduction in the number of complaints. When he first became involved, the number of complaints about THE RIDE was "staggering." After AACT worked with MBTA paratransit administrators and THE RIDE contractors to set up a complaint monitoring and tracking system, the number of complaints decreased significantly and there is ongoing improvement.

There are still many issues to be addressed, such as late pickups, no-shows, and on-time performance. According to Mr. Beaulieu, "We plan to cover a lot of ground. I feel that we are not working only for people with disabilities. When the MBTA makes an improvement for us, it improves service for all."

TOD Webinar Series Gets Underway

Smart Growth America and Reconnecting America, in partnership with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, have begun a three-part series of webcast seminars about the ins and outs of transit-oriented development (TOD), a planning practice that focuses on the creation of neighborhoods around transit centers.

The first session, held on March 2, covered the basic principles of TOD. The second session, scheduled for April 4, will examine how TOD can be pivotal in place-based economic recovery, particularly in revitalizing neighborhoods for people of all income levels. The third session, scheduled for May 3, will feature examples of TOD being implemented in communities across the nation. All webcasts begin at 2:00 P.M. For more information, visit the Local Initiatives Support Corporation's Web site at www.lisc.org.

MPO Agency Notes

From the MBTA

The opening of a 550-space parking garage at Woodland Station in March marked the completion of the first stage of a transit-oriented development project



Woodland Station parking garage

in Newton. The next stage will be the construction of a 180-unit housing development, called Arborpoint, on the site of the MBTA's previous 450-space parking lot at that station. The new development, which will feature an outdoor swimming pool, an indoor workout facility, and underground parking, is expected to be completed in the summer of 2007.

From Massport

Massport and the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce released the results of *Massport Connecting*, a report that

■ *Massport Connecting cont. on p. 4*

■ Mapping Mobility *cont. from p. 1*

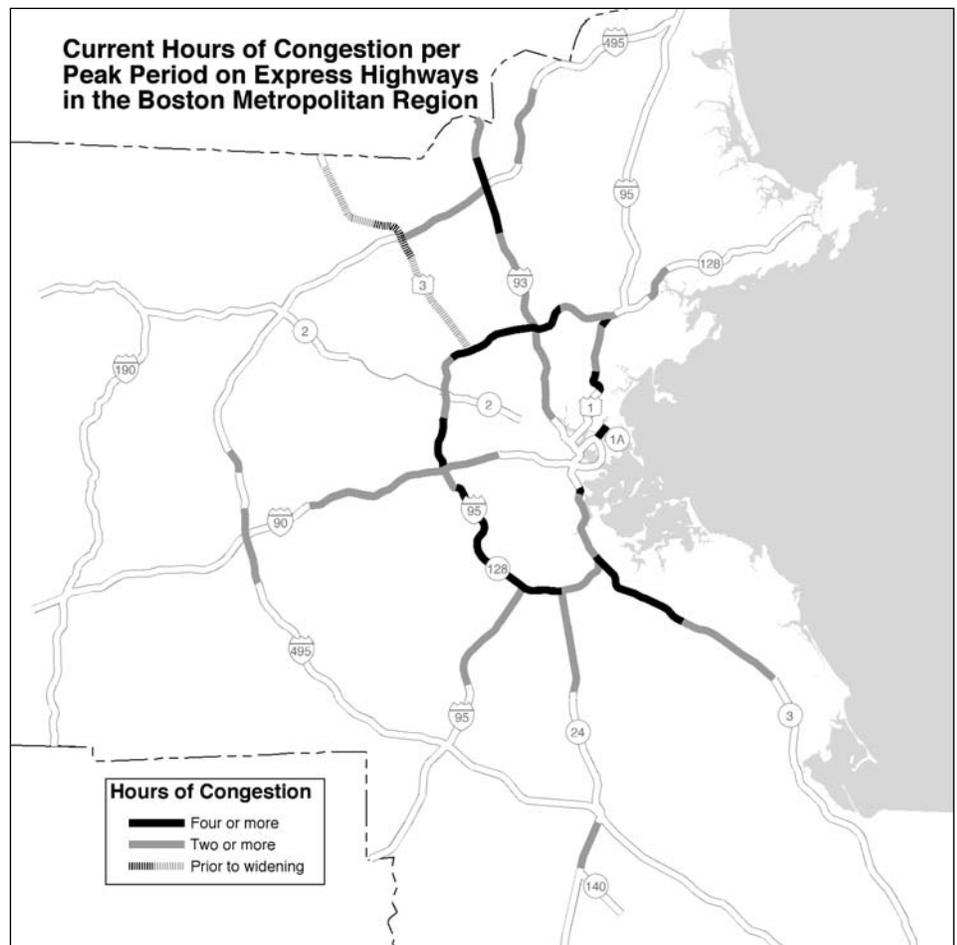
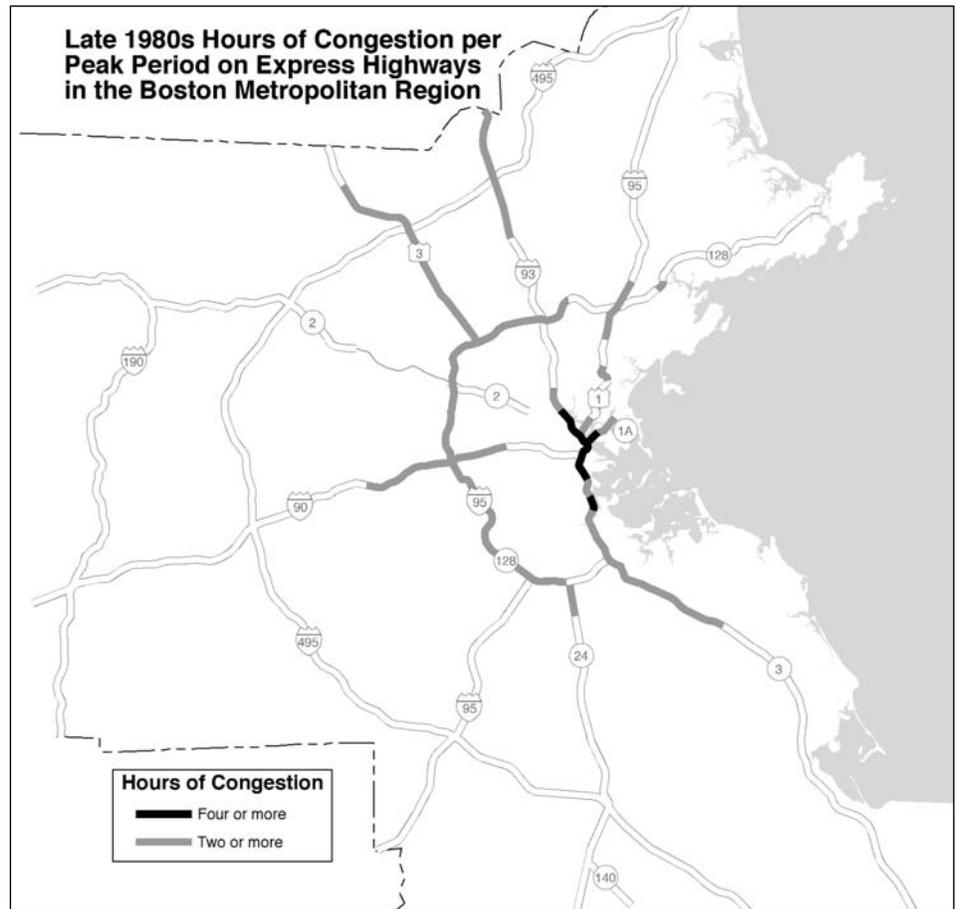
show where congestion occurred in the late 1980s and where it occurs today.

During the late 1980s, 96 miles of express highway were operating at or near capacity for two or more hours per peak period each day; 9 of those miles experienced four or more hours of congestion during one or both peaks. Today, 157 miles of express highway have two or more hours of such congestion per peak period, of which 57 are congested for four or more hours during one or both peaks. Since the late 1980s, congested highways have experienced about one additional hour at or near capacity during both the A.M. and P.M. peaks.

Before construction began on the Central Artery/Tunnel (CA/T) project, almost all of the express highway miles with four or more hours of congestion during each peak were in the CA/T project area. Some Central Artery locations had 14 continuous hours of congestion, from 6:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M. Today, the CA/T express highways experience no significant congestion. This is because the Central Artery and the harbor tunnels are no longer the bottlenecks in the system—they can now accommodate all of the traffic that the radial highways can deliver.

From the analysis, several conclusions may be reached:

- Congestion is a fact of life on many express highways in the region and the number of hours that a highway operates with volumes at or near capacity during peak periods is increasing over time.
- Undertakings such as the CA/T project can contribute significantly to reducing the number of congested hours on our regional express highways.
- Planning for future express highway improvements can benefit from viewing roadways in terms of numbers of congested hours.



MEETING CALENDAR

The public is welcome to attend the following transportation-related meetings. A photo ID is usually required for access to meeting sites.

AT THE STATE TRANSPORTATION BUILDING, 10 PARK PLAZA, BOSTON

Thursday, April 6
**Boston Region MPO
 Transportation Planning and
 Programming Committee** 10:00 A.M.
 MPO Conference Room
 Suite 2150

Wednesday, April 12
**Regional Transportation
 Advisory Council Freight
 Committee** 1:00 P.M.
 MPO Conference Room
 Suite 2150

**Regional Transportation
 Advisory Council** 2:00 P.M.*
 Conference Room 4
 (*Please note the earlier-than-usual
 starting time)

Monday, April 24
**MBTA Rider Oversight
 Committee** 4:15 P.M.
 Conference Rooms 1, 2, and 3

Wednesday, April 26
**Access Advisory Committee
 to the MBTA, Spring Party** 11:00 A.M.
 To RSVP, contact Janie Guion by
 April 12 at (617) 973-7507 (voice),
 (617) 973-7089 (TTY), or aact@ctps.org.

**Access Advisory Committee
 to the MBTA** 1:00 P.M.
 Conference Room 2

Thursday, April 27
**Transportation Improvement
 Program, Municipal Input Day** 9:00 A.M.
 Conference Room 4

Thursday, May 5
**Boston Region MPO
 Transportation Planning and
 Programming Committee** 10:00 A.M.
 Immediately followed by:
**Transportation Improvement
 Program Agency Input Day**
 MPO Conference Room
 Suite 2150

Call (617) 222-5179 for date
MBTA Board of Directors 1:00 P.M.
 Conference Rooms 2 and 3

AT OTHER BOSTON AREA LOCATIONS

Monday, April 3
**MBTA Public Meeting:
 Readville Yard Site Clean Up Plan** 7:00 P.M.
 St. Anne's School
 20 Como Road, Readville

Thursday, April 6
**MassHighway Public Hearing:
 Proposed Fountain Street Bridge
 Replacement in Framingham** 7:00 P.M.
 Framingham Town Hall
 Albondi Room
 150 Concord Street, Framingham

Tuesday, April 11
**Transportation Summit:
 Gridlock or Green Light** 8:00 A.M.
 Fidelity Investments
 400 Puritan Way, Marlborough

**National Institute of Standards
 Forum: Rethinking Transportation** 5:30 P.M.
 Boston Public Library
 Mezzanine Conference Room
 700 Boylston Street, Boston

Tuesday, April 25
**JOURNEY TO 2030 Regional
 Equity Forum** 6:00 P.M.
 Boston City Hall, Room 801
 One City Hall Plaza, Boston

Tuesday, May 2
**Charles River Basin Citizens
 Advisory Committee** 4:00 P.M.
 (For confirmation and location information,
 contact Charlotte Fleetwood at (617)
 951-6440 or csfleetw@bigdig.com.)

Meeting dates and times are subject to change: please
 call (617) 973-7119 for confirmation. Additional
 transportation meetings open to the public are listed
 on the Boston Region MPO Web site, www.bostonmpo.org.

■ Massport Connecting *cont. from p. 2*
 assesses the impact of Massport's transportation facilities and economic developments on the regional economy and industries.

A key finding of the report is that Massport employed 18,462 people as of 2004 (the latest year for which data is available) at its airport, waterfront, and shipping facilities, which is slightly more than the total number of people who worked for the four largest employers in the greater Boston region, or at all 20 of the area's top biotechnology firms. To view the report and other key findings, go to www.massport.com/about/pdf/connec.pdf.

TRANSREPORT

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TRANSREPORT is available in accessible formats
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