

TRANSREPORT

TRANSPORTATION NEWS FROM THE BOSTON METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

MBTA Opens Silver Line Bus Rapid Transit Service with Celebration

The MBTA held a ribbon-cutting ceremony on July 20 to open the first segment of the Silver Line. Completion of Phase I of the project connects Dudley



Silver Line bus at Dudley Station

Station in Roxbury and Temple Place downtown. Hundreds of Boston-area residents and transit enthusiasts attended and joined Transportation Secretary and MBTA Chairman James H. Scanlan, MBTA General Manager Michael H. Mulhern, and business and community leaders in celebrating the launching of the new rapid transit service.

"The Washington Street segment of the

Silver Line will play a large part in transforming how people move around Boston," said Secretary Scanlan. "I look forward to the completion of the next two phases of the Silver Line, which will put the final pieces in place for this state-of-the-art transit service."

The Silver Line is the authority's fifth rapid transit line and the first bus rapid transit (BRT) service offered in Boston. It is also one of the first BRT services in the nation to operate in dedicated lanes. Utilizing the latest in tracking and transportation technology, it offers travelers fast and reliable service with low-floor buses fueled by compressed natural gas. It will significantly reduce pollutants in the neighborhoods along its route by replacing diesel bus service. Initially, the Silver Line will have 40-foot buses, but they will be replaced in less than a year by new 60-foot, articulated vehicles.

"The MBTA is proud to contribute to the continuing renaissance of Washington Street," said General Manager Mulhern. "This \$50 million public investment

has already stimulated almost \$500 million in private-sector development."

Data on the operation and patronage of the service will be collected at regular intervals during its first year by the Boston MPO's Central Transportation Planning Staff for use in evaluating the line's performance and making improvements as needed.

Phase II of the Silver Line project will connect South Station and Logan Airport. Currently under construction, this segment is scheduled to be completed by December 2003. Phase III will link Phases I and II via an underground tunnel between South Station and Boylston Street. General Manager Mulhern announced that Phase III has received the endorsement of the Federal Transit Administration. Construction of this segment is scheduled to begin in 2005 and be completed in 2010.

Silver Line schedules and other information may be obtained by visiting www.mbta.com or call (617) 222-3200.

MPO Working toward Reduction of "Greenhouse Gases"

The Transportation Planning and Programming Committee of the Boston MPO will hold a work session on August 1 featuring a presentation by the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs that will focus on global warming.

The EOEA, in a February 2002 letter to the MPO commenting on the Regional Transportation Plan, then in draft form, stressed the importance of the Plan's fully reflecting the commonwealth's commitment to reducing emissions in the transportation sector of carbon dioxide and

other "greenhouse gases," such as methane and nitrous oxide. The MPO revised the Plan in response to the EOEA's comment.

Also known as the greenhouse effect, global warming is an overall increase in the Earth's temperature resulting from the trapping of certain gases in the atmosphere. The impacts of global warming are thought to include changes in precipitation, sea level increases, and more violent weather events.

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TRANSPORTATION PLANNING & PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE ACTION ITEMS

On July 25 the Boston MPO's Transportation Planning and Programming Committee approved three draft documents to be circulated for public comment:

- A proposed addendum to the Regional Transportation Plan Update, which was adopted in March.
- A proposed amendment to the Fiscal Years 2002-07 Transportation Improvement Program.
- The proposed FY 2003 Unified Planning Work Program.

Preparation of a draft FY 2003-08 TIP is underway. The Committee is expected to approve it for circulation on August 8 with a closing date for public comments set for September 9. The MPO workshops to be held around the region on the documents that have already been approved for public review will also include sessions on the proposed new TIP. See the page 4 article about the documents for information on how to obtain review copies and details on the workshops.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL UPDATE

In July the Regional Transportation Advisory Council heard reports from its committees on the Unified Planning Work Program and the Transportation Improvement Program. UPWP Committee Chair Bob Sturgis noted that there are several new planning projects of particular interest in store for the upcoming fiscal year. TIP Committee Chair Malcolm Davis reported that his committee has been reviewing funding issues and lists of candidate projects.

At its August 14 meeting the Council will develop comments on the documents out for public review (see bullets above) and begin reviewing the FY 2003-08 TIP.

The Council toured the former South Weymouth Naval Air Station on July 17. Members learned about the site's potential for development, current local plans, and the transportation issues involved. Mayor David Madden of Weymouth welcomed the group and Kenneth Goff, executive director of the South Shore Tri-Town Development Corporation, which is responsible for redeveloping the site, guided the site visit.

ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE MBTA UPDATE

At the July meeting of the Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA, Thomas Cunha, chief mechanical officer of the MBTA, addressed members' concerns about problems that customers with disabilities have been experiencing while using the bus system. In addition, Michael Festa of the MBTA's Design and Construction Department briefed members on the Silver Line project (see the related article on page 1). A report from the MBTA's Office of Transportation Access that was distributed at the meeting described progress in resolving track/vehicle interface problems with the new low-floor Green Line cars. If the results are favorable of tests at Riverside Station with specialized equipment that measures the impact of various rack conditions on the low-floor vehicle, the MBTA will run a test car on the B Line in the fall.

Roadway Improvements to Telecom City

On June 27 state and local officials broke ground for a project that will improve access to the



TeleCom City

Telecom City telecommunications development in Malden and Medford. The project will widen Commercial Street and Corporation Way to four lanes and upgrade the traffic signals at the intersection of Commercial Street and Medford Street and the intersection of Corporation Way and Revere Beach Parkway. The improvements will also include new sidewalks, street lighting, roadway drainage, and extensive landscaping.

Acting MassHighway Commissioner John Cogliano said that the work "highlights the Swift administration's continuing efforts to have transportation projects work hand

in hand



with other projects that will provide new jobs for our citizens." Said state senator Richard Tisei, "On behalf of Malden's elected officials, it is great to see TeleCom City moving forward with this major infrastructure improvement."

The \$7.1 million construction contract was awarded to the Middlesex Corporation of Littleton, Massachusetts. Construction is expected to be completed by the end of 2003.

MassPike Toll Discount Spurs FAST LANE Enrollments

On July 1 the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority increased the turnpike tolls at the Weston and Allston-Brighton-Cambridge toll plazas and at the Sumner, Callahan, and Ted Williams tunnels. However, the Authority is giving a 50 percent discount on the increase to noncommercial vehicles that use its electronic toll-collection program, FAST LANE, and this has boosted participation in that program.

The toll increases are an effort to collect additional revenue to meet

annual bond payments on the Turnpike Authority's share of the cost of the Central Artery Project. The new basic tolls for noncommercial vehicles are \$1.00 at the two toll plazas and \$3.00 at the three tunnels. Two-axle commercial vehicles, such as taxis, are now charged \$4.50 at the tunnels.

The 50 percent discount on the toll increase applies to all noncommercial vehicles enrolled in the FAST LANE program, regardless of the user's place of residence. Although users of E-ZPass,

another electronic toll-collection program, are able to use the FAST LANE system, the discount does not apply to them.



New enrollments in FAST LANE, which already had more than 580,000 vehicles participating, accelerated after the announcement of the toll increases and the discount.

During the first week, participation increased by about 700 a day.

The new users should be aware that the

speed limit of 15 miles per hour for FAST LANE tollbooth lanes is being enforced by State Police stationed at all the locations. Fines begin at \$75 and can increase \$10 for every mile per hour over the speed limit.

Applications to enroll in FAST LANE and more information on the program are available online at www.mtafastlane.com. Applications are also available at MassPike toll plazas and at FAST LANE service centers.



FHWA Releases New Edition of "Our Nation's Highways"

The Federal Highway Administration announced on July 2 the release of a new edition of its publication "Our Nation's Highways," which contains a broad range of information on the nation's roads, highway travel, and related subjects. The FHWA has been issuing an "Our Nation's Highways" booklet every other year since 1983. This latest edition contains data that cover through the end of calendar year 2000.

The information includes numbers of vehicles and licensed drivers, fuel tax rates, amounts of fuel consumed, numbers of highway fatalities, and highway and transportation expenditures. Other subjects covered are commute times and lengths, telecommuting trends, freight



transportation, and differences between travel in the United States and travel in other countries.

Data are presented both for the country as a whole and on a state-by-state basis. In addition, the booklet contains data from large urbanized areas on miles of roadway, vehicle miles traveled, and trips per capita.

The booklet may be downloaded from FHWA's Web site. Go to www.fhwa.dot.gov/ohim/onh00/index. Printed copies are available from the Office of Highway Policy Information, FHWA, Room 3306, 400 7th St. SW, Washington, DC 20590. Copies may also be requested by e-mailing to Millie.Wilson@fhwa.dot.gov or by calling (202) 366-0160.

American Eagle Launches New Service

This autumn American Eagle, the regional affiliate of American Airlines, will begin providing regional jet service between New York City's LaGuardia Airport and Boston and between LaGuardia and Washington, D.C.'s Ronald Reagan National Airport. The service, to be called "Business Express," will offer 10 round-trips per weekday between New York and Boston, starting September 24, and 10 between New York and Washington, D.C., starting October 1.

American Eagle already has five flights per day between Boston and Reagan National, with a sixth to be added starting August 1, and serves Boston from four New York-area airports other than LaGuardia: JFK, Newark, White Plains, and Islip. It recently announced that its operation at Boston will become all-jet by August.

New Bedford/Fall River FEIR: Comment Period Extended

The public comment period for the MBTA's Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the New Bedford/Fall River Commuter Rail Restoration project has been extended four weeks to August 23, 2002. The MBTA asked the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) office of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) for the extension after officials from the towns of Stoughton, Easton, and Raynham requested additional review time.

Copies of the FEIR may be obtained from the MBTA's Office of Environmental Affairs; contact Andrew Brennan at (617) 222-3126 or abrennan@mbta.com.

All comments should be addressed to:

Executive Office of Environmental Affairs
Attention: MEPA Unit
Re: EOE A #105090
251 Causeway Street, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02114

Public Comment Period Opens on MPO Documents; Workshops Scheduled

On July 25 the Boston MPO's Transportation Planning and Programming Committee released three draft documents for public review and comment:

- A proposed addendum to the Regional Transportation Plan Update, which was adopted in March.
- A proposed amendment to the Fiscal Years 2002-07 Transportation Improvement Program.
- The proposed FY 2003 Unified Planning Work Program.

The proposed addendum to the Transportation Plan Update responds to a recommendation from the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration that the MPO draw conclusions from the Update's assessment of the environmental justice of the region's transportation services and facilities and relate those conclusions to the Update's recommendations. It provides tables summarizing an exhaustive set of data that is included in an appendix to the Update. The data compare the characteristics of transportation services available to minority versus nonminority populations and those available to low-income versus

non-low-income populations, and also present systemwide characteristics. The data include such service characteristics as bus routes' on-time performance, scheduled frequency, and average vehicle age.

The addendum also assesses projects in the Plan Update for their impact on low-income and minority communities and identifies continuing efforts that the MPO will be conducting in coordination with the recently restructured Environmental Justice Committee. (See the June issue of *TRANSREPORT* for related articles.)

The proposed amendment to the FY 2002-07 TIP updates the status of projects, reflecting the latest information on their cost estimates, funding sources, and readiness to be advertised by September 30. It is a necessary step in the development of the FY 2003-08 TIP, which is expected to be circulated for public review by August 8.

The draft FY 2003 UPWP provides information on surface transportation planning studies and activities to be con-

ducted in the Boston region during the upcoming year and presents detailed budget information for those of the studies and activities that will be conducted on behalf of the MPO.

The comment period for all three documents will close on September 3 at 3:00 P.M. Public workshops on the documents will be held in Boston, Framingham, Quincy, and Salem this month (see page 6 for workshop times and locations). To request a copy of these documents or of the draft FY 2003-08 TIP, contact the Central Transportation Planning Staff at (617) 973-7100, (617) 973-8855 (TDD), or publicinformation@ctps.org. They are also available for downloading from the MPO's Web site at www.bostonmpo.org, and for viewing at libraries and municipal offices in the MPO's 101 cities and towns.

Two MPO meetings will be held in September to endorse the final documents, which will include all written comments received during the review period. The location and time of the meetings will be announced in the next issue of *TRANSREPORT*.

Conference On Region's "Decade of Opportunity"

On May 22 more than 400 of metropolitan Boston's government, business, academic, and community leaders gathered to discuss the future of the region at a forum sponsored by Boston College, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), the Boston Foundation, and UMass Boston. The keynote speaker for the event, which was called "A Decade of Opportunity: Crafting a Collaborative Vision for the Future of Metro Boston," was architect, lecturer, and *Regional City* author Peter Calthorpe. The forum was held at the Swissôtel in downtown Boston.

Others who spoke at the meeting included MAPC president and Marlborough mayor William J. Mauro, Jr., and Somerville Mayor Dorothy A. Kelly Gay. Said Mayor Mauro, "Our work over the next several years will inform us and guide us as we prepare to meet the challenges of a new decade and a new century. What is impor-

tant about today is we can begin to think collectively about the kind of future that we want in metropolitan Boston as opposed to the kind that will just happen if we don't stop to plan for the direction we would like to go."

"Cities are the economic engines of the region, providing jobs, culture, recreation, tourism, higher education opportunities, health care, and housing, all of which are critical to our regional economy," said Mayor Kelly Gay. "If we are to address regional issues more comprehensively and start building bridges between our cities and suburbs, we need to have a safe place to find our common ground."

The presentations made at the forum included one on regional trends in land development, population, employment, water demand, and transportation, and one on the results of a poll of Greater Boston residents about quality of life,

crime, education, growth, development, and other local and regional concerns.

The meeting closed with the group's formation of a Process Design Team, a task force charged with developing a regional vision and growth strategy. The team's first meeting was held on June 20 and attended by over 60 people. The participants established a consensus on their expectations and desired outcomes for the process. At the team's second meeting, held on July 23, it discussed what aspects of the region's future need to be addressed by the planning process, such as housing, demographics, transportation, and quality of life.

To obtain more information on the May 22 forum, log on to www.mapc.org and select the "About MAPC/What's New" link. To learn more about the Process Design Team, contact Tracy Lawrence of MAPC at tlawrence@mapc.org.

New MBTA Commuter Rail Stations Open; Train Service Expanded



On July 10 the renovated and redesigned Hamilton/Wenham commuter rail station was dedicated. State Transportation Secretary James H. Scanlan, MBTA General Manager Michael H. Mulhern, and local elected officials were in attendance. The improvements to the station, which cost \$2.6 million, feature a 200-space parking lot and a new 700-foot platform on the eastern side of the track. The new platform eliminates the need for passengers to cross the track to board trains, enhancing both safety and accessibility. The platform is also located further south than the previous one, which will solve the problem of trains tying up traffic on Route 1A when stopped at the station.

The improvements to the station also include extensive drainage work in the parking lot, and new lighting and signage. Almost 400 passengers board each day at the station, which is on the MBTA's Rockport/Newburyport Line.

Commuter rail stations in Southborough and Westborough on the Framingham-

Worcester Line opened for service on June 22. These stations are among four new stops being added between Framingham and Worcester. This project is nearing completion: a station in Grafton opened in February 2000, and a station in Ashland is scheduled to begin service this month. The line serves about 9,000 passengers daily; the MBTA estimates that when the four new stations are in operation ridership will exceed 11,100.

The Southborough station cost \$4.87 million to construct, the Westborough station \$4.9 million. Both are accessible to persons with disabilities and have 800-foot platforms, canopies, benches, bicycle racks, newspaper vending machines, and safety systems that warn of the approach of trains. The Southborough station has 420 parking spaces. At Westborough there is parking for 311

commuters; that station has an elevated track crossing.

In related news, the MBTA expanded evening commuter rail service to Haverhill on July 8. The new trips, which make all local stops, are an outbound departure from North Station at 10:35 P.M. arriving in Haverhill at 11:39 P.M., and a 10:21 P.M. inbound departure from Haverhill

arriving in Boston at 11:23 P.M. The schedule was expanded in response to concern expressed by patrons over a three-and-a-half-hour gap between evening trains.

The lack of trains in that interval was



Westborough Station

a constraint for people working a long day at the office or having a night out in the city. In connection with adding the new trips, schedule adjustments of one or two minutes were made to other trips in the line's timetable. New schedules are available at North Station.

Amtrak's Downeaster Adds Stop at Anderson RTC

The Downeaster passenger rail service, which Amtrak runs between Boston and Portland, Maine, now has two additional stops. One, at the Anderson Regional Transportation Center in Woburn, Massachusetts, is permanent. The other, at Old Orchard Beach, Maine, is seasonal.

The Anderson RTC stop, which was instituted on July 1, provides northbound passengers an alternative boarding location in the Boston area. It is hoped that it will draw some patrons away from busy North Station. The Anderson RTC is convenient to both I-93 and I-95, and has parking for more than 1,100 automobiles.

The Downeaster began stopping at Old Orchard Beach on July 12 and will con-

tinue to do so through October 31. The station, which is located on First Street near the Chamber of Commerce, has a covered platform and parking for over

100 automobiles. Old Orchard Beach is a 100-year-old beach town with attractions that include a popular amusement park.

The Downeaster service has three train sets, each consisting of a locomotive, three passenger coaches, and a café car. It operates seven days a week, 365 days a year. Students, senior citizens, and children receive discounted fares.

Reservations may be made by calling 1-800-USA-RAIL or visiting www.amtrak.com.



New Bus Service Aids Reverse Commute to Hopkinton and Milford

A new rush-hour bus route operated by LIFT (Local Inter-Framingham Transportation) provides Milford and Hopkinton residents with a link to and from the new MBTA commuter rail station in Southborough. With a stop at EMC Corporation's headquarters in Hopkinton, the "LIFT 4" service is aimed at capturing "reverse commuters" who ride from Boston to work in Milford and Hopkinton, as well as commuters who head inbound to their jobs.

The route operates on weekdays only and has 10 round-trips per day, five during the morning peak period, five during the evening peak period. Morning trips begin at 5:50 A.M. at the park-and-ride lot at the corner of Main and Beach streets in Milford. Evening trips begin at 5:00 P.M.

■ LIFT 4 *cont. on p. 6*

MEETING CALENDAR

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

MEETINGS AT THE STATE TRANSPORTATION BUILDING, 10 PARK PLAZA, BOSTON

Thursday, August 1

Boston MPO Transportation Planning and Programming Committee Work Session on Draft 2003-08 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) 10:00 A.M.
MPO Conference Room, Suite 2150

Thursday, August 8

Boston MPO Transportation Planning and Programming Committee: Vote to Circulate Draft 2003-08 TIP (tentative) 10:00 A.M.
MPO Conference Room, Suite 2150

MBTA Board of Directors 1:00 P.M.
Room to be assigned; check second floor information board for on day of meeting.

Wednesday, August 14

Regional Transportation Advisory Council 3:00 P.M.
Conference Room 1

Monday, August 19

Presentation and Discussion of MPO Documents under Review: 12:00 P.M.
• **Draft Environmental Justice Addendum to the Regional Transportation Plan**
• **Draft FY 2000-07 Transportation Improvement Program Amendment**
• **Draft FY 2003 Unified Planning Work Program**
Conference Room 2

Wednesday, August 28

Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA (AACT) 1:00 P.M.
Conference Room 2/3

BOSTON MPO WORKSHOPS

Additional presentations and discussions of the Boston MPO's Draft Environmental Justice Addendum to the Regional Transportation Plan, Draft FY 2002-07 TIP Amendment, and Draft FY 2003

Unified Planning Work Program will take place at workshops to be held at the following locations:

Monday, August 19

Roxbury Workshop 5:30 P.M.
Boston Public Library's Dudley Branch
65 Warren Street, Roxbury
(Walking distance from Dudley Station)

Tuesday, August 20

Quincy Workshop 6:00 P.M.
Quincy City Hall
Second Floor Meeting Room
1305 Hancock Street, Quincy
(Walking distance from Quincy Center Station)

Wednesday, August 21

Framingham Workshop 6:00 P.M.
Framingham Town Hall
Memorial Building
Ablondi Room
150 Concord Street, Quincy
(Walking distance from Framingham commuter rail station)

Tuesday, August 27

Salem Workshop 6:00 P.M.
Salem City Hall Annex
120 Washington Street, Salem
(Walking distance from Salem commuter rail station)

OTHER BOSTON-AREA MEETINGS

Fenway Planning Task Force Monthly Meeting and Third Community Meeting 6:30 P.M.
Northeastern University
Engineering Science Center
Raytheon Amphitheater, 1st Floor
120 Forsyth Street, Boston
(Walking distance from Northeastern E Line stop or Ruggles Station)

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 MPO Web site, at www.bostonmpo.org

■ LIFT 4 cont. from p. 5

at the Southborough commuter rail station. The trips are coordinated with the arrivals and departures of trains. The buses stop at Collella's Market on Route 135 in Hopkinton and at the town hall on Main Street in Milford, as well as at EMC.

The LIFT 4 service is being funded by a \$131,000 grant funneled through the MBTA in an effort to improve air quality and ease congestion in the area. Fares are \$1.50 each way. Parking at the 75-space park-and-ride lot in Milford is free. To obtain a schedule or other information, call LIFT at (508) 620-4823.

TRANSREPORT

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