

TRANS REPORT

TRANSPORTATION NEWS FROM THE BOSTON METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Nomination Period Opens for Local MPO Seats in Key Election Year

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) and the MBTA Advisory Board notified the region's chief elected officials in March of the upcoming elections for three of the six local, or municipal, seats of the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).



of the MPO includes:

- Annual development of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), a six-year, federally funded, multi-

billion-dollar transportation construction program.

- Development of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), an annual document that sets forth regionally significant planning projects to be conducted in the area.
- Development of the region's 25-year Transportation Plan, which must be updated every three years.
- Overseeing administration of CTPS and the implementation of CTPS's portion of the UPWP.

In addition to the above, as a result of a recent federal certification review, the MPO has been charged with completing corrective actions within strict time frames to maintain certification. These corrective actions include revision of the MPO's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which is expected to have a strong impact on the way in which state, local, and regional interests are balanced. The federally required actions, which also include revisions to the region's public participation procedures and the continuation of environmental justice work efforts, promise to make for a busy and exciting term for MPO members.

The yeoman's work of the MPO is conducted by the Sub-Signatory Committee (SSC), on which each MPO-member organization has one representative, who is appointed by that organization's head.

"The region is far better served than when there was no local representation. Then you had very little recourse for your projects. Now . . . you have a voice at the table."

Mary Pratt, MPO representative for the Town of Hopkinton

The Boston MPO is currently composed of 17 members:

- Five state transportation agencies (permanent members): the Executive Office of Transportation and Construction, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, Massachusetts Highway Department, Massachusetts Port Authority, and Massachusetts Turnpike Authority.
- Three regional organizations (permanent members): MAPC, the MBTA Advisory Board, and the Joint Regional Transportation Committee.
- Two federal agencies (permanent members): the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration.
- Seven municipalities (one permanent, six elected members): Boston, which holds a permanent seat; two cities and one town whose two-year terms expire in 2002 (Everett, Newton, and Hopkinton); and one city and two towns whose two-year terms expire this spring (Peabody, Bedford, and Framingham).

Together, the MPO members conduct transportation planning and programming in the region's 101 cities and towns with assistance from the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) and input from the public. The ongoing work

The SSC meets frequently, as often as several times a month depending on the workload, in the State Transportation Building in Boston.

In addition, there is a Local TIP Subcommittee composed of MAPC, the MBTA Advisory Board, and city and town members, which meets monthly in Newton. This group is responsible for developing a program of local projects for inclusion in the TIP. Defining the future role of this committee is expected to be a key element of the upcoming MOU revisions, given the federal mandate to unify the Boston MPO.

■ Nominations *cont.* on p. 3

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SUB-SIGNATORY COMMITTEE ACTION ITEMS

At its March 13 meeting, the Boston MPO's Sub-Signatory Committee (SSC) approved the following three work programs to be conducted by the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS):

- **Additional Forecasts for the Arborway Study** – In this work effort, CTPS will provide ridership forecasts to an MBTA consultant retained to address technical issues relating to the alternative-fuel bus service option that is being examined for the Arborway restoration project. CTPS's part of the project is estimated to cost about \$15,000. The work will be documented in a technical memorandum that will include air quality analysis as well as the ridership forecasts.
- **Fiscal Year 2001 Analysis to Support Massport Studies on Ground Access, Regional Transportation, and Air Quality** – In this \$85,000 work effort, CTPS will update the Logan Airport ground-access mode-choice model to reflect the results of a 1999 passenger survey, analyze the passenger survey data, and provide parking inventory analysis, clean-air technical assistance, and other on-call services.
- **Regional Model Enhancement** – This \$1.8 million, three-year project is the continuation of an ongoing work effort begun in 1989 that allows CTPS to maintain a state-of-the-practice regional model for use by the MPO, regional and state transportation agencies, and MPO cities and towns. An in-depth *TRANSREPORT* article about how this key transportation planning tool is used will be included in next month's issue.

JRTC UPDATE

At the March Joint Regional Transportation Committee meeting, Craig Della Penna of the Rails to Trails Conservancy gave a presentation on current work efforts of this nationwide advocacy organization based in Washington, D.C. Mr. Della Penna will be returning to the JRTC in the near future to assist the committee in developing recommendations on specific rail-trail projects for the Boston region. The JRTC will also be engaged in developing policy recommendations on the MPO's Congestion Mitigation Air Quality Program in the upcoming months.

AACT UPDATE

At its March meeting, the Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA heard two presentations, one from the MBTA's Design and Construction Department on accessibility plans for Kenmore Station and another from the Boston Redevelopment Authority on plans for a new, completely accessible water transportation facility on Boston's Long Wharf.

Public Meeting Announced for Regional Truck Study

A third public meeting on the Regional Truck Study will be held in Cambridge on April 3 (see the calendar on page 4 for details). The study, sponsored by the Massachusetts Highway Department, is being conducted to address community concerns in the municipalities of Boston, Cambridge, Somerville, Arlington, Belmont, and Watertown. It is examining potential policy changes and roadway improvements that could create a regional trucking network to address both trucking and community interests within the study area. The study goal is to identify opportunities for serving common interests by addressing truck impacts in residential neighborhoods while retaining the ability of trucks to deliver commodities critical to the regional economy.

Two public meetings on the study were held in June and October of last year. At the first, the study process was presented and input was sought on defining issues to be examined. At the second meeting, preliminary truck routing alternatives were presented. The purpose of the April 3 meeting is to present information on additional research performed on existing conditions and current policies, and an analysis of regional truck routing alternatives.

For further information on the study or the public meeting, contact Barbara Lucas of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council at (617) 451-2770.

Massport Announces New Logan Express Facility to Serve the North Shore

The Massachusetts Port Authority has selected a site for a new Logan Express park-and-ride facility. The new facility, to be located at 146 Newbury Street in Peabody, will be the fourth in this Massport program, which provides bus service to and from Logan International Airport.

The new service, projected to begin operation this fall, is expected to eliminate 200,000 car trips a year to and from Logan. The Peabody site offers easy access to Route 1 and Interstate 95. The

facility will open with 200 parking spaces; plans are to eventually expand the site to accommodate 700 spaces.

The first Logan Express facility opened in Braintree in 1986 as part of a mitigation agreement to increase high-occupancy-vehicle ridership to the airport. Framingham service also began in 1986, and a Woburn facility opened in 1993. In 2000 a record 1.1 million passengers used Logan Express to access Logan Airport.



Logan Express bus leaving Woburn park-and-ride facility

Amtrak Introduces Additional Acela Express Service in the Northeast Corridor

On March 5 Amtrak added two new Acela Express trainsets to its Northeast Corridor service. Acela Express began in December with one round-trip per day,



Acela Express train heading toward Boston's South Station

Monday through Friday, between Washington and Boston via New York City, which arrives in Boston at 11:31 A.M. and departs at 5:12 P.M. One of the new trains adds one Boston–New York round-trip per day, Monday through Friday, with a schedule oriented to the Boston-based traveler. It leaves South Station in Boston at 6:12 A.M. and arrives at Penn Station in New York City at 9:40 A.M.; its return trip departs Penn Station at 6:00 P.M. and arrives at South Station at 9:28 P.M. This train serves interim stations in New Haven and Providence in addition to stopping at Route 128 and Back Bay stations in the Boston area.

The other new train runs express round-trips between New York City and Washington, making the journey in under two

and a half hours. The original Acela Express round-trip between Washington and Boston remains unchanged, with the exception of the elimination of the stop at Baltimore–Washington International Airport.

Amtrak will continue to phase in more Acela Express service through the end of the summer as more trains arrive from the manufacturers, Bombardier and ALSTO, who are building a total of 20 high-speed trainsets. When all trainsets are in service, there will be 19 daily round-trips between New York and Washington and 10 between Boston and New York.

MPO Nomination Papers Due April 12

■ Nominations *cont. from p. 1*

Mary Pratt, the MPO representative for the Town of Hopkinton, observed, "Serving on the MPO requires a huge time commitment and a willingness to travel into the city fairly frequently and to Newton once a month. There also is a long, steep learning curve which, even after three years, still requires more to learn. However, the region is far better served than when there was no local representation. Then you had very little recourse for your projects. Now we call cities and towns or they contact us and attend the Local Subcommittee as well as SSC meetings. You have a voice at the table. Over the past four years I have seen a better gelling of the state and local members. It's not perfect; but then, Rome wasn't built in a day. A keener knowledge, as well as a better prioritization of projects according to their needs, makes it well worth our collective efforts."

The election will take place on May 23 at the MAPC Annual Meeting, at a location to be announced. Nomination papers are due on April 12.

Pilot Program for Late-Night Weekend Bus Service Announced by MBTA

The MBTA announced in March that it will extend its weekend service hours on 17 bus routes in a one-year pilot program to begin on September 1. The current plan, which is the result of a feasibility study begun last year, is to operate 31 buses over 10 new routes and seven existing routes until 2:30 A.M. on weekends.

The planned new routes will serve the MBTA's four subway corridors. The use of buses instead of trains to provide late-night transportation balances the need to close the subways from 1:00 A.M. to 5:00 A.M. for regular maintenance and the public's need for late-night service for both work and play.

"This plan represents a sensible approach to the delivery of public transportation services after normal operations have ceased," said MBTA general manager Robert H. Prince, Jr.

The pilot program, which is expected to cost \$2.5 million, will be monitored throughout its implementation to determine whether service hours should be extended even further on certain bus routes.

CURRENT MBTA PLAN FOR EXTENDED WEEKEND SERVICE HOURS*

Existing Bus Routes

- 1 Harvard–Dudley via Mass. Ave.
- 11 Downtown–Bayview
- 28 Dudley–Mattapan
- 57 Downtown–Watertown via Kenmore
- 66 Harvard–Dudley via Brookline
- 77 Harvard–Arlington Heights
- 111 Downtown–Woodlawn

Buses on Subway Corridors

Blue Line

- Downtown–Wonderland

Orange Line

- Downtown–Oak Grove via Lechmere
- Downtown–Forest Hills via Dudley

Red Line

- Downtown–Alewife
- Downtown–Ashmont (local)
- Downtown–Braintree (express)

Green Line

- Downtown–Boston College (B)
- Downtown–Cleveland Circle (C)
- Downtown–Riverside (Newton only D)
- Downtown–Forest Hills (E and Route 39)

*Anticipated start date: September 1, 2001

Sources: MBTA and *Boston Globe*

MEETING CALENDAR

The public is welcome to attend the following transportation-related meetings this month.

AT THE STATE TRANSPORTATION BUILDING, 10 PARK PLAZA, BOSTON

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| Thursday, April 5 Boston MPO Sub-Signatory Committee Work Session on the Transportation Plan CTPS Conference Room, Suite 2150 Second Floor | 10:00 A.M. | Thursday, April 19 Boston MPO Environmental Justice Ad Hoc Committee Conference Room 4 Second Floor | 2:00 P.M. |
| Wednesday, April 11 Joint Regional Transportation Committee (JRTC) Conference Center Second Floor | 3:00 P.M. | Wednesday, April 25 Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA (AACT) Conference Room 2/3 Second Floor | 1:00 P.M. |
| Thursday, April 19 Boston MPO Sub-Signatory Committee CTPS Conference Room, Suite 2150 Second Floor | 11:00 A.M. | | |

AT OTHER BOSTON-AREA LOCATIONS

| | | | |
|---|-----------|---|--|
| Tuesday, April 3 Boston MPO Local TIP Subcommittee Newton City Hall 1000 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton | 2:00 P.M. | April 27–April 29 How We Live: A Civic Initiative for a Livable New England: Regional Charrette Northeastern University Registration fee: \$50 <i>For registration information contact Boston Society of Architects at (617) 951-1433, ext. 225, or alee@architects.org, or visit www.architects.org.</i> | |
| Central Artery Corridor Master Plan Open House 185 Kneeland Street, Boston (Conference Room 1, adjacent to lobby) | 5:30 P.M. | | |
| Regional Truck Study Public Meeting Cambridge Senior Center 806 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge (Across from Cambridge City Hall) | 7:00 P.M. | | |

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.ctps.org/bostonmpo/involved/meetings.

Central Artery Corridor Master Plan Open House Set for April 3

There will be an opportunity on April 3 to see work in progress on and comment on the evolution of design and planning ideas for the Central Artery Corridor Master Plan, which will be completed in May. Planners, designers, and representatives from the Central Artery/Tunnel Project will be available to discuss the planning with attendees.

This open house replaces the March 20 meeting, which was rescheduled to allow for a better setting for informal dialogue and up-close review by the public. See the calendar on this page for details.

TRANSREPORT

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