



BOSTON REGION METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 5, 2017
TO: Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization
FROM: Jennifer Rowe, Public Participation Program Manager
RE: Public Outreach Plan for the Long-Range Transportation Plan

This memorandum serves as an outline of the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) public outreach related to the development of its next long-range transportation plan (LRTP), *Destination 2040*. Public outreach activities are proposed for the period between the fall of 2017 and the summer of 2019.

1 OBJECTIVE

The MPO's vision for public participation in the region is "to hear, value, and consider—throughout its planning and programming work—the views of and feedback from the full spectrum of the public, and use this input in its decision making."¹ For this reason, MPO staff encourages robust, inclusive, and informed dialogue, debate, and negotiation in all MPO decisions. The MPO's Public Participation Program aims to engage the people of the Boston region in a collaborative transportation planning process.

The LRTP represents a particularly significant set of decisions that determine how the MPO (and its partners) will meet the transportation needs of the Boston region over the next 20 years. Through outreach, MPO staff aims to help all stakeholders, including the public, understand, follow, and participate in developing this important policy, planning, and programming document.

2 AUDIENCES

In line with the MPO's vision for public participation, MPO staff aspires to engage the full spectrum of the public in the MPO's long-range transportation planning. *Destination 2040* will be informed by input from a variety of individuals and groups with an interest in transportation including, but not limited to, the following:

- Regional Transportation Advisory Council

¹ *Public Participation Plan*, Page 26

- Municipalities
- Transportation agencies, including Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), and regional transit authorities
- Professional groups (e.g., planners, engineers)
- Community organizations
- Economic development and business organizations
- Transportation and environmental advocates

Staff will make a concerted effort to reach populations that have been underserved by the existing transportation system or that have unique transportation needs and challenges:

- People with disabilities
- People with low incomes
- People of color
- People with limited English proficiency
- Young people
- Older adults

3 TIMELINE

Over the next two years of *Destination 2040*'s development, staff will ask the public to share information and weigh in on several upcoming decisions. Figure 1 presents the time periods during which various types of input will be most helpful and most likely to influence the MPO's deliberations.

FIGURE 1
Participation Opportunities in Long-Range Transportation Planning

Phase	Input	Start	End
Needs	Identify transportation needs and opportunities for improving transportation in the region	Fall 2017	Spring 2018
	Comment on the draft Needs Assessment Report	Summer 2017	Summer 2017
Vision and Goals	Share input on the MPO's transportation vision and goals and weigh in on MPO discussions	Summer 2018	Fall 2018

Phase	Input	Start	End
Investment Strategies	Share priorities for transportation projects and investment programs	Fall 2018	Winter 2019
	Indicate preferences between investment scenarios, informed by their predicted impacts on the transportation system	Fall 2018	Winter 2019
	Review candidate projects and investment programs and weigh in on MPO funding discussions	Fall 2018	Spring 2019
Finalization	Comment on selected projects, investment strategy, and draft LRTP	Spring 2019	Spring 2019

Note: This timeline is subject to change. Visit the Destination 2040 project development webpage at bostonmpo.org/lrtp-dev (currently under development) for schedules of meetings, events, and related documents and materials.

4 KEY MESSAGES

In order to encourage stakeholder engagement, staff will use the following set of talking points to explain the purpose, content, and importance of the LRTP.

FIGURE 2 LRTP Talking Points

- The federal government created MPOs to facilitate fair, effective, and coordinated decisions about how to use federal transportation dollars. The Boston Region MPO conducts regional transportation planning for the 101 municipalities of the Boston metropolitan region.
- The MPO continuously monitors the state of the transportation system for all travel modes and tracks progress yearly through a set of performance metrics and targets. Then, every four years, the MPO identifies the system's strengths and weaknesses and creates a 20-year plan to improve transportation in the region.
- The MPO seeks input into the transportation and mobility needs that will inform its next plan, *Destination 2040*. The vision and goals of *Destination 2040* will guide all of the MPO's planning efforts and its investments.

- The LRTP allocates funding for major infrastructure projects—those costing more than \$20 million or adding roadway and transit system capacity (new roadway lanes or transit links).
- The LRTP also sets aside funding for smaller projects such as Complete Streets roadway reconstruction, pedestrian and bicycle connections, intersection design and traffic signal upgrades, parking expansion at transit stops, and local transit services. The MPO's performance targets and each subregion's priorities will guide funding allocations among these investment programs.

5 KEY QUESTIONS

MPO staff will ask stakeholders questions to elicit input during the development of *Destination 2040*. Staff will pose these questions through a variety of means and forums, detailed in the next two sections. Below are examples of questions designed to guide discussions of transportation needs and opportunities—the first major phase of LRTP outreach.

FIGURE 3 Key Questions Regarding Needs and Opportunities

- What's working well with the transportation system in your community?
- Are there transportation barriers or mobility issues that prevent people from getting where they need to go?
- Are there transportation needs that you've heard from people of color, people with low incomes, older adults, youth, people with disabilities, and people with limited English proficiency?
- What changes or trends are occurring that might affect the transportation system and how you use it?
- What opportunities for improving the transportation system do you see now or in the near future?

6 COMMUNICATION METHODS

MPO staff aims to make it easy to access the information required to understand, follow, and engage in the MPO's long-range transportation planning. In-person meetings, website content, emails, social media, and other electronic means will be used for external communications, as described in more detail below.

To reach as diverse a set of participants as possible, all vital documents and communications surrounding vital documents will be translated into the five most commonly spoken non-English languages in the region: Spanish, Portuguese, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, and Haitian Creole. Vital documents include event notices and brochures describing the MPO's planning activities. Staff will translate additional material related to the LRTP when meeting with non-English speakers and upon request.

6.1 Meetings

Every month, MPO staff members attend meetings, conferences, and events. For a snapshot of these types of events, refer to Section 7 below. Regardless of whether the MPO is hosting, co-hosting, staffing a table, or simply in attendance, staff will introduce *Destination 2040* to new audiences. To facilitate this effort, staff will produce a series of outreach materials, including posters, timelines, and brochures.

6.2 Website

MPO staff is developing a separate webpage for *Destination 2040* for interested parties to follow the LRTP's development. The webpage will gather, in one location, everything needed to understand, follow, and participate in the MPO's long-range planning activities. Visitors will find a timeline of upcoming and past events, data visualization applications, places to provide comments, and advice on how to get involved.

6.3 Electronic Notifications

MPO staff will notify a broad range of stakeholders about LRTP milestones and participation opportunities through complementary modes of communication:

- *Emails*: Subscribers to the MPO's email list can opt in or opt out of communications about meeting agendas, engagement opportunities, transportation equity updates, notices from the Advisory Council, and *TRANSREPORT* blog articles. Emails are the MPO's primary means of notifying interested parties about opportunities for engagement.
- *Tweets*: The MPO's Twitter account is followed by transportation advocates, community groups, other government agencies, and interested members of the public. Staff routinely tweets about updates and engagement opportunities in the MPO's planning. Links to the *Destination 2040* webpage and the *TRANSREPORT* blog allow viewers to easily access additional information. Tweets complement the use of email communications.

- *Homepage Banners*: Large, inviting banner graphics with prominent “action buttons” will serve to alert MPO website visitors to important announcements and opportunities.
- *MAPC Matters*: MPO staff sends monthly updates on MPO activities to the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) for publication in an “MPO Corner” of their *MAPC Matters* newsletter. These updates are used to reach out to a broader audience.

7 ENGAGEMENT METHODS

MPO decisions—regarding the issues that are studied and the projects that are ultimately built—are made at meetings that many community members may be unable to attend. Through the MPO’s Public Participation Program, staff works to provide opportunities for members of the public to participate in long-range transportation planning and to ensure that everyone’s voice may be heard, valued, and considered.

All of the MPO-sponsored public outreach venues comply with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility standards and are accessible by public transportation.

7.1 Advisory Council

Throughout the development of *Destination 2040*, MPO staff will provide updates to the Regional Transportation Advisory Council. The Advisory Council’s membership includes municipalities, local businesses, public agencies, advocacy groups, and other interested parties. The Advisory Council has a seat on the MPO board and offers the MPO essential, independent advice on its planning and programming, including *Destination 2040*. The Advisory Council’s monthly meetings are open to the public and provide a forum for broad-based and robust discussions about the MPO’s long-range planning. MPO staff will present and have discussions with the Advisory Council at least once during each of the four major phases of LRTP development: assessing needs, revisiting the MPO’s vision and goals, selecting investment strategies, and finalizing the LRTP.

7.2 MPO Meetings

The MPO welcomes public comments at all meetings, offering stakeholders a chance to offer their input into and feedback about MPO decisions. The board usually convenes twice a month at the State Transportation Building and meets outside the City of Boston four times a year in order to make attendance easier for people living or working outside the city. MPO staff will update the MPO on LRTP activities on a regular basis and provide related materials on the *Destination 2040* web page and the MPO meeting calendar. Staff expects to

present and discuss LRTP topics with the MPO most frequently in calendar year 2018 and early 2019, when members select investment strategies and finalize the LRTP.

7.3 Office Hours

Staff plans to continue offering Office Hours monthly at consistent, designated times for the public to engage in one-on-one conversations with MPO staff. Interested parties either visit the Central Transportation Planning Staff office to meet with staff or call on the phone. While MPO staff welcomes comments and questions at any time, these times are specifically reserved for communicating with the public, making it easier for participants to connect with staff.

7.4 Open Houses

Open Houses allow the public the opportunity to comment on the MPO documents in person, while learning more about transportation planning via posters and interactive displays. Staff hosts Open Houses when planning decisions of interest to a significant number of stakeholders are on a critical course. Staff anticipates hosting at least three Open Houses during the development of *Destination 2040*.

7.5 Subregional Group Meetings

MAPC's municipal subregional groups bring together planners, department directors, other interested municipal officials (including elected officials), and often members of the public to discuss, plan, and coordinate on common issues related to housing, economic development, and transportation. MPO staff will visit each of the MAPC subregional groups three or four times during LRTP development. Staff uses these visits to provide updates on *Destination 2040* and gather input and feedback.

7.6 Meetings with Stakeholder Organizations

Destination 2040 requires input from a broad range of stakeholders, including those who may not be able to attend the MPO's public meetings or events. Staff will respond to invitations to attend regularly scheduled meetings of municipalities, transportation advocacy organizations, professional groups, and other organizations interested in discussing transportation issues and learning how to shape the transportation system in the region.

In addition, staff has been proactively building relationships with organizations serving the needs of people with low incomes, people with disabilities, people with limited English proficiency, older adults, and communities of color. We will reach out to our contacts in these organizations to gather input about the

transportation needs and challenges of the people they serve and to plan how to best communicate and engage with their constituents.

7.7 Surveys and Comments

Staff occasionally distributes electronic surveys asking stakeholders for their thoughts, ideas, and feedback on specific topics. Surveys will be posted on the *Destination 2040* webpage and sent out via email and Twitter.

Staff also anticipates receiving comments and questions throughout the development of *Destination 2040* and during designated public review periods. Staff generally responds using the same media through which the comment or inquiry was made. All written comments are summarized and presented to the MPO for consideration, as are comments generated at meetings and outreach through website and email media.

7.8 Partner Events

Staff seeks opportunities to partner with MAPC, the MBTA, MassDOT, and other organizations to reach broader audiences. Staff will look for opportunities to attend and present at conferences and other events that draw stakeholders with an interest in improving the regional transportation system.

For example, MPO staff will use the MAPC Fall Council Meeting in 2018 as a forum to interact with municipal officials in the region. Staff had a table at the Moving Together Conference in 2017 and anticipate having a presence again in 2018. Staff will also seek similar opportunities at upcoming Focus40 events.

8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This proposed outreach plan will help all stakeholders, including the public, understand, follow, and participate in the development of the LRTP. Staff will inform MPO members of upcoming events and update the MPO on the input we have gathered throughout the LRTP development. We encourage MPO members to join staff at these events and participate in engaging with municipalities, the public, and various other stakeholders.

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