



BOSTON REGION METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Jamey Tesler, MassDOT Secretary and CEO and MPO Chair
Tegin L. Teich, Executive Director, MPO Staff

WORK PROGRAM

ADDRESSING EQUITY AND ACCESS IN THE BLUE HILLS

MARCH 17, 2022

Proposed Motion

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) votes to approve this work program.

Project Identification

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Classification

Boston Region MPO Planning Studies and Technical Analyses

Project Number 13314

Client

Boston Region MPO

Project Supervisors

Principal: Annette Demchur

Manager: Sean Rourke

Funding Source

MPO Planning Contract #114674 and MPO Combined PL and §5303.

Schedule and Budget

Schedule: 7 months after work commences

Budget: \$40,000

Schedule and budget details are shown in Exhibits 1 and 2, respectively.

Relationship to MPO Goals

The Boston Region MPO elected to fund this study with its federally allocated metropolitan planning funds during federal fiscal year (FFY) 2022. The work completed through this study will address the transportation equity and capacity management and mobility goal areas established in the MPO's Long-Range Transportation Plan.

Background

The Blue Hills Reservation, a state park located approximately 10 miles south of downtown Boston, is a popular outdoor recreation destination for Boston-area residents. It is also home to a number of cultural and environmental attractions, including a community farm, a museum, and an arboretum. However, despite being less than four miles from Mattapan and seven miles from Roxbury, Blue Hills is difficult to reach and navigate by public transit, presenting an issue of unequal access for those who do not own or have access to cars, particularly low-income, Boston-area residents. A coalition that includes the Urban Outdoors Association, Friends of the Blue Hills, the Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition, Brookwood Community Farm, and the Mary May Binney Wakefield Arboretum approached MPO staff and the UPWP Committee in early 2021 with a proposal to study public transit access to the Blue Hills Reservation.

Objective

1. Identify, through targeted and inclusive outreach and collaboration with advocacy and community organizations, as well as planning and municipal partners, barriers to accessing Blue Hills from Boston neighborhoods with high concentrations of transit-equity populations
2. Review and analyze public transit access to Blue Hills from Boston neighborhoods with high concentrations of transit-equity populations
3. Identify potential solutions to improve public transit access to Blue Hills

Work Description

Task 1 Conduct Outreach to Advocacy and Community Organizations, and Planning and Municipal Partners

Staff will research relevant advocacy and community organizations, and Boston Region MPO planning and municipal partners, and engage in conversations with them about

- the populations they serve and their communities' barriers to accessing Blue Hills and other outdoor recreation spaces; and
- their views as community leaders on how difficulty accessing outdoor recreation space, including Blue Hills, affects the populations and neighborhoods they serve.

Staff will assemble an advisory group comprised of advocacy and community organizations. MPO staff will consult with the advisory group at approximately six meetings throughout the study so that staff can remain close to ongoing conversations around transportation equity and access to outdoor recreation spaces. The advisory group may include staff of other planning agencies, including the

Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) and municipal partners, but will be comprised primarily of advocates and community leaders. The planned meeting topics will include the following subjects:

First meeting (early March)—Introductory meeting with the core group that proposed the Blue Hills study to gather input for refining the work program.

Second meeting (late March)—Opportunities to expand the membership of the group to add more perspectives from the community and planning agencies.

Third meeting (April)—Consulting with the group about the outreach process and discussing progress on tasks 2 (context review) and 3 (existing access to Blue Hills).

Fourth meeting (May)—Consulting with the group about progress on task 3 (existing access to Blue Hills) and brainstorming about ways to improve access (task 4).

Fifth meeting (June)—Consulting with the group about progress on task 4 (possible access solutions).

Sixth meeting (August)—Discussing preliminary findings with the group to gather additional input before the final study product is published.

As allowable by pandemic conditions, agency guidelines, and resource availability, staff may hold some meetings in person, perhaps in a neighborhood served by one of the community organizations.

Product of Task 1

Summaries of stakeholders' views of unequal access to outdoor recreation space, including Blue Hills, to demonstrate the extent of the inequities and to document the collaborative process in identifying possible solutions.

Task 2 Review Recent (since 2017) Public Discussions Surrounding Access to Blue Hills and Issues of Equity of Access to Outdoor Recreation Spaces for Boston Residents

Staff will seek out and review recent discussions, studies, data, surveys, and coverage of the issues of access to Blue Hills and the larger issue of unequal access to outdoor recreation spaces for Boston residents. This is important to establish context for the study so that the Boston MPO and staff can credibly and sensitively enter and participate in the ongoing conversation around these topics.

Product of Task 2

A summary of the recent history and context of the public discussion around unequal access to Blue Hills and outdoor recreation spaces for some Boston residents.

Task 3 Review and Analyze Existing Public Transit Options, and Compare Access to the Blue Hills Reservation Using Different Modes of Transportation

Staff will review and analyze existing public transit access to Blue Hills from different communities in and around Boston. Staff will also compare access for people who own cars to those who rely on public transit.

Products of Task 3

An analysis of existing public transit options to access Blue Hills.

A comparative analysis of access from different communities in and around Boston using different modes of transportation.

Task 4 Explore and Design Possible Solutions to Improve Access via Public Transportation

Staff will explore possible solutions to improve public transit access to Blue Hills, including

- engaging the MBTA's Bus Network Redesign to explore whether any options to improve access to Blue Hills are already being considered; and
- identifying expanded or new bus routes to improve public transit access to Blue Hills.

Staff will workshop identified possible solutions with the advisory group to ensure they align with the needs of their communities.

Products of Task 4

A summary of any plans already underway to improve access to Blue Hills and an analysis of whether they meet the needs identified by stakeholders.

A short list and summary of possible solutions to improve access to Blue Hills.

Task 5 Produce an ArcGIS StoryMap and Present Findings

Staff will produce an ArcGIS StoryMap hosted on the MPO's website to summarize the findings of this study, including

- highlights of the themes and community needs identified by the public engagement efforts;
- a summary of the context of discussions, studies, data, surveys, and coverage of the issues of access to Blue Hills and the larger issue of unequal access to green spaces and outdoor recreation spaces for some Boston residents;

- a comparative analysis of access from communities in and around Boston using different modes of transportation to demonstrate the issue of unequal access; and
- identified and new possible solutions to improve access.

Staff will present their findings to the advisory group and the Boston Region MPO Board.

Products of Task 5

A StoryMap and a presentation.

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) operates its programs, services, and activities in compliance with federal nondiscrimination laws including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987, and related statutes and regulations. Title VI prohibits discrimination in federally assisted programs and requires that no person in the United States of America shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin (including limited English proficiency), be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity that receives federal assistance. Related federal nondiscrimination laws administered by the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, or both, prohibit discrimination on the basis of age, sex, and disability. The Boston Region MPO considers these protected populations in its Title VI Programs, consistent with federal interpretation and administration. In addition, the Boston Region MPO provides meaningful access to its programs, services, and activities to individuals with limited English proficiency, in compliance with U.S. Department of Transportation policy and guidance on federal Executive Order 13166.

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Title VI Specialist
Boston Region MPO
10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150
Boston, MA 02116
civilrights@ctps.org

By Telephone:

857.702.3702 (voice)

For people with hearing or speaking difficulties, connect through the state MassRelay service:

- **Relay Using TTY or Hearing Carry-over:** 800.439.2370
- **Relay Using Voice Carry-over:** 866.887.6619
- **Relay Using Text to Speech:** 866.645.9870

For more information, including numbers for Spanish speakers, visit <https://www.mass.gov/massrelay>

Exhibit 1
ESTIMATED SCHEDULE
Addressing Equity and Access in the Blue Hills

Task	Month						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Conduct Outreach to Advocacy and Community Organizations	[Task 1 bar]						
2. Review Recent Public Discussions Surrounding Access to Blue Hills	[Task 2 bar]						
3. Review and Analyze Existing Public Transit Options		[Task 3 bar]					
4. Explore and Design Possible Solutions to Improve Access			[Task 4 bar]				
5. Produce an ArcGIS StoryMap and Present Findings					[Task 5 bar]		A

Products/Milestones

A: StoryMap and presentation

Exhibit 2
ESTIMATED COST
Addressing Equity and Access in the Blue Hills

Direct Salary and Overhead											\$40,000
Task	Person-Weeks							Direct Salary	Overhead (109.09%)	Total Cost	
	M-1	P-5	P-4	P-3	P-2	P-1	Total				
1. Conduct Outreach to Advocacy and Community Organizations	1.1	0.0	0.5	0.4	1.0	3.2	6.2	\$7,716	\$8,418	\$16,134	
2. Review Recent Public Discussions Surrounding Access to Blue Hills	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	1.1	\$1,406	\$1,534	\$2,939	
3. Review and Analyze Existing Public Transit Options	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.0	0.7	0.0	1.7	\$2,474	\$2,699	\$5,173	
4. Explore and Design Possible Solutions to Improve Access	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.9	\$1,416	\$1,545	\$2,961	
5. Produce an ArcGIS StoryMap and Present Findings	1.7	0.0	1.2	0.0	1.0	0.6	4.5	\$6,119	\$6,675	\$12,793	
Total	3.7	0.7	2.0	0.4	3.0	4.6	14.4	\$19,130	\$20,869	\$40,000	
Other Direct Costs											\$0
TOTAL COST											\$40,000

Funding

MPO Planning Contract #114674 and MPO Combined PL and §5303