

# **Draft Memorandum for the Record Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization TIP Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee Meeting Minutes**

## **September 4, 2025, Meeting**

2:30 PM–3:49 PM, Zoom Video Conferencing Platform

Jen Rowe, Chair, representing the City of Boston

## **Decisions**

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee agreed to the following:

- Approve the minutes of the meeting of July 24, 2025

## **Materials**

Materials for this meeting included the following:

1. June 12, 2025, TIP Process, Engagement, and Readiness Meeting Minutes ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

## **Meeting Agenda**

### **1. Introductions**

J. Rowe welcomed committee members to the meeting of the TIP Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee. See attendance on page 8.

### **2. Public Comments**

There were none.

### **3. Action Item: Approval of July 24, 2025, Meeting Minutes**

A motion to approve the minutes was made by the Inner Core Committee (Brad Rawson) and seconded by the Town of Brookline (Erin Chute). The motion carried.

### **4. TIP Readiness Policy Improvements—*Adriana Jacobsen, MPO Staff***

A. Jacobsen gave an overview of the proposed TIP readiness guidelines. She explained why it is essential that readiness guidelines are enforced. First, the TIP is the

mechanism through which the MPO's visions and goals are delivered, including the projects studied in the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) and the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). Next, the TIP is an important mechanism for uplifting local municipal priorities to align with wider regional priorities. The only way for these visions and goals to come to fruition and for the relationship between the three certification documents to be realized is if these projects are ready to advertise on time.

A. Jacobsen reminded the committee that the Boston Region MPO enacted the TIP Project Cost Policies in 2021. This policy required more advanced design at the time of project programming, additional communication between project proponents and the board, and the rescoring of projects that increase in cost by a certain threshold. The first intervention required a 25 percent design for new projects only. Although the 25 percent design submission can be a significant barrier, it is not the only point of conflict faced. Projects can also experience delays at the 75 percent and 100 percent design stages. In addition, some smaller municipalities may struggle to achieve the 25 percent design status without the guarantee of construction funding. This intervention created a higher barrier of entry for programming but failed to address the challenges facing the current program. The second intervention, regarding additional communication, was largely successful in its implementation. However, there was no enforcement mechanism for proponents that did not respond to requests for information. Some board members expressed frustration that they were not hearing updates from proponents of projects that were experiencing issues. In addition, if the board did receive project updates that might impact project readiness, board members did not always feel comfortable singling out a specific project. The third intervention also required board members to single out projects for rescoring. This rescoring was also largely reactive and was not timed well with the annual TIP development season. In summary, these interventions were well-crafted but difficult to enforce.

A. Jacobsen stated that the new policy had three major needs. First, the readiness requirements should be for all five programming years, not just for the first. Next, all projects that have been programmed on the TIP for a certain number of years should go through a rescoring process, allowing board members to not have to single out specific projects. Lastly, the policy should be standardized for all projects. A. Jacobsen reminded the committee of the proposed readiness standards and explained that the guidelines were based on data from recently advertised projects that were not delayed. She noted that not all readiness issues are alike, so the board might have to take different actions to address varying readiness issues. For example, a minor delay of a project programmed in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2030 might have less impact than a significant delay of a project programmed in FFY 2027. There are three main actions

that the board could take: requiring project proponents to communicate with the board, delaying the project into an appropriate programming year, and removing the project from the TIP. In addition, there are three methods of enforcement. The board could recommend the action, they could vote to take the action, or the action could be automatically required without board input. More acute issues could have stricter and more automatic consequences, while minor readiness issues could have more illustrative or flexible consequences. She noted that communication is already required by the original TIP Project Cost Policies enacted in 2021.

A. Jacobsen opened the conversation up for discussion. She asked the committee to consider next steps and policy specifics.

### ***Discussion***

E. Chute asked if this policy is intended to be enforced in the long term or if it is meant to correct current issues and “right the ship.”

A. Jacobsen answered that there are some issues that the policy is not intending to eradicate, such as routine cost increases, scope changes, and delays, but is instead intended to better address these recurring issues.

E. Lapointe added that the guidelines are still under discussion and are subject to deliberation by the board. Longer-term strategies could be discussed in the future, but this policy is intended to be put into place by the next TIP development season in the winter of 2026.

J. Rowe added that once the first stage of the readiness guidelines are passed, the board could discuss how much flexibility projects could have, what the enforcement mechanisms may be, and other specifics.

E. Lapointe stated that the best way to get a project experiencing readiness issues off the TIP program is to advertise it. These guidelines are intended to help projects move forward and advertise for construction.

B. Rawson stated that some of the main contributors to project risk are utility conflicts and right-of-way issues. These concerns are not necessarily under municipal control. He stated that he would like to explore the impact of different readiness policies on these risk factors. He also asked if the readiness criteria could have a component regarding rescoping projects, because rescoping can be a major risk factor for project readiness. For example, if a project undergoes rescoping, it could be automatically flagged for further investigation.

Lenard Diggins (Town of Arlington) noted that the TIP program does not have a large buffer in its budget. Several programming years have very little funding surplus. He asked if delayed projects would displace projects in later programming years that were not experiencing readiness issues.

A. Jacobsen answered that she and E. Lapointe had discussed this concern. They both agreed that if a project is delayed, it should be programmed in the earliest FFY that both suits its readiness status and has sufficient funding surplus.

Dennis Giombetti (MetroWest Regional Collaborative) asked if there is a design threshold that could be applied to more complex projects, considering that the 25 percent design threshold may be difficult to achieve without guaranteed construction funding. He asked if there is a way to differentiate between complex and non-complex projects.

John Bechard (Massachusetts Department of Transportation) answered that projects are flagged for risk with respect to design completion, right-of-way, and environmental permitting. These risks may reflect the project's complexity. This information may not necessarily be shared with MPOs; instead, it is an internal part of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) process. He stated that the information could be shared if the MPO would gain benefit from it, but it is not typically readily available.

D. Giombetti asked if the MPO considers readiness in its scoring process.

E. Lapointe answered that readiness is not part of the scoring criteria because there is no LRTP vision or goal area regarding project readiness.

D. Giombetti asked if the LRTP could be adjusted to include a focus on project readiness.

J. Rowe stated that projects programmed in the fifth year of the TIP have historically been considered to be ready for advertisement in five years.

D. Giombetti asked if significant changes in scope should lead to committee or board review of the project's programming status.

J. Bechard explained that changes in scope can come from many sources. For example, it can come from a highway district, from a regional office, from the Complete Streets team, or other entities. Scope changes can add risk factors such as additional

permitting. These changes may not be unworthy of funding but may need to be assessed by the MPO board.

E. Lapointe asked the committee to consider the specifics of the readiness policy. He stated that the committee could examine the specific drivers of project delays once clearer guidelines and milestones are established.

J. Rowe responded to D. Giombetti's concern about the 25 percent design threshold. They explained that the minimum requirements of the five-year readiness guidelines allowed for projects to be programmed in the fifth year of the TIP without having achieved a 25 percent design submission.

E. Lapointe stated that part of the intention behind the readiness guidelines is to receive more information about the project timelines. Design stages can take six months or several years depending on the complexity of the project.

L. Diggins asked what MPO staff use to score applications of projects that have not yet submitted a 25 percent design.

E. Lapointe answered that many project applicants that have not submitted a 25 percent design have already gone through a scoping meeting and narrowed down the design to just a few alternatives. Other projects may have submitted a 25 percent design already, but it has not been received or reviewed by MassDOT staff yet. He noted that there is a difference between projects that plan to submit their 25 percent design within a few months and projects that are at a more conceptual stage.

L. Diggins inquired about the fairness of scoring projects that may be at different design stages.

E. Lapointe answered that the scoring criteria is built to be applied to projects with relatively low levels of design detail.

L. Diggins suggested incorporating a roleplay exercise to a TIP Committee meeting where committee members could test out the proposed policies.

E. Lapointe stated that MPO staff hope to have the MPO board review this policy by December 2025, in order for the policy to be in place for TIP Readiness Days in February 2026.

B. Rawson asked if the information flow between project proponents, MPO staff, and MassDOT staff was automated or informal.

E. Lapointe answered that the MassDOT team has structured processes for project tracking, but the MPO staff typically only receive structured readiness information during TIP Readiness Days each February. MPO staff want to create a better system for project monitoring, especially because the information shared during TIP Readiness Days is usually focused on near-term crises instead of long-term issues.

Michael Trepanier (MassDOT) stated that his colleague Ben Muller is working on improving these channels of communication. There has been some hesitancy in the past of sharing project data that may contain sensitive information. However, MassDOT staff are working on providing a better programmatic five-year view of project statuses.

### **5. TIP Project Scoring and Rescoring—*Ethan Lapointe, MPO Staff***

E. Lapointe stated that MPO staff plan to send an email to proponents of the projects selected for scoring or rescoring on Friday, September 5, 2025, containing the Google Form for project information solicitation. The email will also be sent to MassDOT project managers, staff at MassDOT Highway Headquarters, and subregional coordinators. In October, MPO staff will return to the MPO board with a draft policy codifying this process. The policy would cover what events trigger a project rescoring and which projects would be subject to rescoring under new TIP criteria established under a new LRTP cycle. This will occur in tandem with LRTP updates. This process is intended to be iterative and to adapt to changes over time. MPO staff hope that if this process were to be repeated in a future TIP cycle, the process would be easier because there would be fewer unscored projects and fewer projects that had not been rescored in more than five years. The objective of the rescoring policy is to help set a new baseline alongside the cadence of each new LRTP. Each LRTP has different vision and goal areas, which require a different set of scoring criteria. E. Lapointe asked the committee to consider how the policy should be written and if the rescoring efforts should line up with the LRTP cycles. He also asked the committee if it would be helpful to develop a draft policy for the TIP Committee to review before it is released to the wider MPO board.

### ***Discussion***

B. Rawson noted the importance of reiterating that this policy is not intended to choose projects for removal from the TIP. Instead, it is meant to level the playing field and ensure that all projects have a score based on the same criteria.

### **6. Members' Items**

Chris Klem (MassDOT) stated that he is leaving his position in the MPO Activities Team at MassDOT. He is joining the Community Grants Group in the Highway Division. Derek

Shooster will be filling in for his current role. He thanked the TIP Committee for the opportunity to participate.

## **7. Next Meeting**

The next meeting date has not yet been set.

## **8. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made by the Inner Core Committee (Brad Rawson) and seconded by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (Chris Klem). The motion carried.

## Attendance

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| <b>Members</b>                                                      | <b>Representatives and Alternates</b> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| City of Boston                                                      | Jen Rowe                              |
| Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)                           | Brad Rawson                           |
| Metropolitan Area Planning Council                                  | -                                     |
| Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)                | Chris Klem                            |
| Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)                | John Bechard                          |
| MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA)                        | Tyler Terrasi                         |
| MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham)               | Dennis Giombetti                      |
| Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Acton) | -                                     |
| Community Advisory Council                                          | -                                     |
| At-Large Town (Town of Arlington)                                   | Lenard Diggins                        |
| At-Large Town (Town of Brookline)                                   | Erin Chute                            |

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| <b>Other Attendees</b> | <b>Affiliation</b>         |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| Aleida Leza            | -                          |
| Barbara Lachance       | MassDOT                    |
| Ben Muller             | MassDOT                    |
| Caitlin Allen-Connelly | -                          |
| Derek Shooster         | MassDOT                    |
| Jay Monty              | City of Everett            |
| John Romano            | MassDOT                    |
| Jeff Coletti           | MWRTA                      |
| Michael Trepanier      | MassDOT                    |
| Patricia Wada          | City of Cambridge Resident |
| Priscilla Cuevas       | City of Boston             |
| Rick Azzalina          | Stantec                    |
| Robert Warren          | -                          |

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**MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff**

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Tegin Teich, Executive Director

Adriana Jacobsen

Annette Demchur

Dave Hong

Erin Maguire

Ethan Lapointe

Stella Jordan

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