

Freight Planning Program

FFY 2026 Total Budget	\$124,000
Schedule	Ongoing

Purpose

The Freight Planning Program is a federally required program to explicitly consider, analyze, and reflect freight facilities and movements in the planning process. Freight and logistics play a vital role in the multimodal transportation system and regional economy. Planning for freight includes planning movements of goods and services by land (road and rail), air, and water. Freight Planning Program activities support the MPO's long-term goals by (1) analyzing freight-related safety data, assessing safety concerns, and researching freight policies to identify actionable recommendations (safety goal); (2) engaging stakeholders to promote freight transportation efficiency, intermodal connectivity, and workforce mobility (access and connectivity goal); and (3) developing strategies to reduce the environmental impacts of freight vehicles/warehouses and the consequent negative impacts on communities (clean air and healthy communities goal).

The Freight Planning Program recognizes ongoing and new developments in the freight sector, identifies key issues, sets priorities, encourages the expansion of sustainable modal choices, and supports the efficient movement of goods within the Boston metropolitan region and beyond. As the freight sector is regional and multi-jurisdictional, the Freight Planning Program requires coordinated efforts across the Boston Region MPO, regional stakeholders, and decision-makers, making it one of the program's primary focus areas.

The Freight Planning Program supports the following federal requirements for the MPO-related freight activities:

- Incorporate goals, objectives, performance measures, targets, and relevant elements from the State Freight Plan and other state transportation plans and transportation processes into the metropolitan transportation planning process.
- Provide freight stakeholders a reasonable opportunity to provide feedback on the region's TIP and LRTP.
- Assist MassDOT, as needed, in measuring and setting targets for the Truck Travel Time Reliability Index to evaluate national freight movement on the Interstate Highway System, with targets reported to FHWA.
- Support the federally required 3C metropolitan transportation planning process by assisting in the development of federal certification documents, including the TIP, LRTP, and UPWP.
- The 2018–19 MPO certification review advised that the Freight Action Plan be updated every four years.

Approach

The MPO's freight planning activities are guided by the [2013 Freight Planning Action Plan](#) and its [2019 update](#), and are aligned with MassDOT [2023 Massachusetts State Freight Plan](#) and the [National Zero-Emission Freight Corridor Strategy](#). In FFY 2026, the Freight Planning Program will focus on the following tasks:

- **Updating the Freight Action Plan:** MPO staff will update the Freight Action Plan to align with the vision and goals of the Freight Planning Program. This update will incorporate findings from recent studies, including the FFY 2025 UPWP [discrete study on cargo e-bikes for first-/last-mile freight deliveries](#), as well as the results of the safety analysis from the [MPO's Safety Action Plan](#). In addition, MPO staff will research freight policies and regulations set by FHWA, MassDOT, National Highway Transportation Safety Administration, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, and other agencies. Through this research, MPO staff will identify gaps and opportunities for policy improvements along with the potential role of the MPO in freight policy-oriented work.
- **Beginning Work on the Regional Freight Decarbonization Plan:** Developing a Freight Decarbonization Plan for the Boston region will be a multiyear effort. In FFY 2026, MPO staff will build on the results of the FFY 2023 UPWP study [Sustainability and Decarbonization in the Freight and Logistics Sector in the North Suffolk Area](#) and establish a foundation for this multiyear effort. Initial steps will include identifying and engaging with relevant stakeholders, and conducting a literature review of peer agencies' decarbonization plans to inform a freight decarbonization strategy for the region.
- **Engaging stakeholders on Freight Data Dashboard:** MPO staff launched a [Freight Data Dashboard](#) that maps various freight infrastructure data from the MPO, MassDOT, and the FHWA in FFY 2025. In FFY 2026, MPO staff will engage with the freight stakeholders in the region to identify any gaps in the existing mapped data.

FFY 2026 Anticipated Outcomes

- Updated Freight Action Plan
- Literature review of Regional Freight Decarbonization Plans
- Summary of stakeholder feedback on the existing Freight Data Dashboard