

Draft Memorandum for the Record

Community Advisory Council Meeting

March 9, 2026, Meeting Minutes

2:00-3:30 PM, Zoom

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

Sean Rourke of the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) staff called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM. Members and guests attending the meeting introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page 5.)

2. Chair's Report— *Caitlin Allen-Connelly, TransitMatters*

Caitlin Allen-Connelly provided an overview of the agenda for the current meeting. C. Allen-Connelly shared summaries of recent MPO meetings including the following:

- February Community Advisory Council meeting that focused on the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2027 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) discrete studies
- February 19 MPO meeting that focused on the unprogrammed balance in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and updated MPO committee quorum policies
- February 25 TIP Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee meeting that focused on the FFYs 2027-31 TIP project scoring and readiness guidelines
- February 26 UPWP Committee meeting during which the committee voted on the FFY 2027 UPWP discrete studies
- March 5 MPO meeting in which the MPO approved the Calendar Year (CY) 2026 transit safety targets and reviewed rescored TIP projects

3. Public Comments

Wig Zamore of Somerville shared the perception that environmental justice analyses of the Greater Boston region seem to leave lower Mystic to Lynn communities out of full equity considerations as compared to Boston neighborhoods or Cambridge.

4. Approval of February 9, 2026, Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of February 9, 2026, meeting was made by C. Allen-Connelly and seconded by Jason Palitsch (495/Metrowest Partnership). The minutes were approved.

5. Advisory Council Member Information Sharing

Members from Bike to the Sea (B2C), Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation (CSNDC), and Transportation for Massachusetts (T4MA) shared projects or initiatives with the Advisory Council.

Discussion

B2C stewards the Northern Strand Trail. Jonah Chiarenza (B2C) talked about the B2C's bike kitchen (DIY bike repair space) created in a vacant lot adjacent to the Northern Strand Trail on Canal Street in Malden. The bike kitchen is a drop-in space for community members to repair their bikes during specific weekday times.

Jacynda Epenshade (CSNDC) discussed CSNDC's work as an affordable housing developer and CSNDC's 20-year history of supporting advocacy for the Fairmount commuter rail line. J. Epenshade shared a new website that CSNDC and Emerson students created about the Fairmount Line. W. Zamore asked about CSNDC's Fairmount Line air quality monitoring and asked J. Epenshade to be in contact about air quality research.

Reggie Ramos (T4MA) discussed T4MA's structure as a statewide transportation justice coalition that works on 1) policy and research, 2) cross-sector activation (connecting transportation to public health, housing, etc.), 3) strengthening coalitions and organizing spaces for collaboration, and 4) investing in coalition members' community work. R. Ramos requested help from Advisory Council members in spreading the word about T4MA's application period for their Champions Institute that focuses on building capacity to advance Complete Streets priorities. T4MA organizes this program in partnership with Smart Growth for America, WalkMass, and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC).

6. Public Engagement Plan Discussion – Sean Rourke, Manager of *Communications and Engagement, Boston Region MPO*

MPO staff are updating the MPO's Public Engagement Plan. S. Rourke outlined how the Public Engagement Plan guides the MPO's public engagement practices and ensures compliance with federal regulations. S. Rourke described how the MPO's practices have improved since the Public Engagement Plan was last updated in 2021. S. Rourke shared the timeline for the development of the new plan, which includes two more plan discussions with the Advisory Council and a public comment period.

Discussion

Amir Wilson (A Better City) asked whether there is statewide guidance on which technology platforms to use for virtual engagement and information for the public on how to use that technology. S. Rourke replied that there is not statewide guidance, but there is an opportunity to improve the specificity of agency policies around virtual engagement.

Paulina Muratore (Conservation Law Foundation) asked how the plan might change due to the changing federal landscape, including changes in language about environmental justice and equity. S. Rourke replied that there might be changes in terminology, but civil rights and equity requirements still exist and the MPO will demonstrate how our practices meet these requirements.

C. Allen-Connolly asked how Advisory Council members could support the 45-day public review period to ensure broad distribution of the public comment opportunity. S. Rourke expressed appreciation for the offer and indicated that there will be several opportunities for Advisory Council members to participate in the public review period. C. Allen-Connolly said that it would be helpful to have specific guiding questions to guide Advisory Council discussions of the plan in future meetings.

S. Rourke said that MPO staff are focused on ensuring that the Public Engagement Plan demonstrates compliance with federal regulations while also providing a foundation for additional internal resources for MPO staff on public engagement. S. Rourke welcomed the Advisory Council's role in informing the Public Engagement Plan and additional internal engagement guidance.

J. Chiarenza asked about how MPO staff view the purpose of the engagement plan and the role of public engagement in making sure the right things are in the plan. S. Rourke explained that the Public Engagement Plan is a document focused on compliance that serves as the starting point for what the MPO wants to do around public engagement and expressed the MPO's genuine interest in hearing from the public in all work.

W. Zamore said that, based on experience engaging with the MPO and MAPC for many years, most people do not understand the planning process well enough and have unrealistic expectations about how quickly projects will happen. W. Zamore thinks sharing project histories would help people be realistic about the long timeframe involved in implementing projects. S. Rourke agreed on the challenges of helping set realistic public expectations on the timescale of regional planning and affirmed the MPO's commitment to continue to find more ways to better communicate that.

7. Members' Items

- C. Allen-Connolly reported that TransitMatters is hosting a Women in Transit event on March 23 for Women's History Month and encouraged people to attend.
- Maha Aslam (LivableStreets Alliance) reminded the group that March 18 is Transit Driver Appreciation Day and encouraged people to thank bus drivers and MBTA operators on this date.

8. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by Scott Mullen (A Better City) and seconded by Maureen Aylward (Town Green). The motion carried.

Attendees

Member Municipalities	Representatives and Alternates
Natick	Morgan Griffiths

Citizen Advocacy Groups	Attendees
A Better City	Scott Mullen and Amir Wilson
Abundant Housing MA	Jesse Kanson-Benanav
Bike to the Sea	Jonah Chiarenza
Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corp. (CSNDC)	Jacynda Epenshade
Conservation Law Foundation	Paulina Muratore
LivableStreets Alliance	Maha Aslam
Mystic River Watershed Association	Karl Alexander
Mystic Valley Elder Services	Sheila Buckland
Prevention Research Center (PRC) on Nutrition and Physical Activity, T.H. Chan School of Public Health	Angie Cradock
Transportation for Massachusetts (T4MA)	Reggie Ramos
Town Green	Maureen Aylward
TransitMatters	Caitlin Allen-Connelly
Watertown TMA	
495/MetroWest Partnership	Jason Palitsch

Agencies (Non-Voting)	Attendees
MassDOT	Maria Foster
MBTA Advisory Board	Isabella MacKinnon

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Wig Zamore	
Dan Jaffe	
Will Palmer	TransitMatters

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Gina Perille
Sean Rourke
Jia Huang
Abby Cutrumbes Heerema
Lauren Magee
Michaela Grenier

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