

TRANSREPORT

TRANSPORTATION NEWS FROM THE BOSTON REGION METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

MPO Seeks Public Opinion on Election Procedures

Do you understand the MPO election process? Do you see ways that the MPO's current election process can be improved? —These are questions that the

DON'T SIT THIS ONE OUT!



Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority Advisory Board and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), the MPO member entities charged with overseeing the MPO's election process, will be asking at two public meetings, which will be held on October 11 in Westwood and on October 13 in Woburn (see page 6 for details). The elections select three cities and three towns to sit on the Boston Region MPO.

The Advisory Board and MAPC began the review of the current election process on behalf of the MPO in September with visits to the eight MAPC subregional groups. The purpose of these visits was to gather input from local officials on how well they think the MPO election process works and to hear directly from the communities about ways that the process can be improved. In addition to attending the October public meetings, members of the public may request a copy of the MPO's current election procedures and offer related comments and suggestions; contact Barbara Lucas at MAPC at blucas@mapc.org or Paul Regan of the Advisory Board at pregan.advbrd@verizon.net.

MPO Holds Walkable Community Workshops

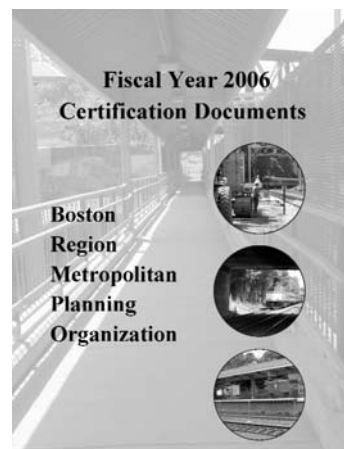
After attending the MPO's Walkable Community Workshops in the towns of Maynard and Arlington last month, the 40 participants now view their communities in a whole new way! They are brainstorming to implement some new ideas for pedestrian improvements around town. Arlington residents will be pursuing a better connection at Massachusetts Avenue to link two sections of the Minuteman Bikeway, as well as providing better pedestrian access along the avenue, which is the town's main street. Maynard residents will be examining pedestrian improvements in the town center along Main and Nason streets, as well as links to local parks and the proposed Assabet Rail Trail.

The workshops are designed to assist local officials and citizens in making a community more walkable. The workshops include a presentation showing proven techniques to implement and pitfalls to avoid, a "walking audit" (site visit), and a follow-up discussion of what was viewed and possible improvements.

Based on the interest shown in the previous workshops, the MPO will be holding three more: in Mattapan on October 18, in Belmont on October 28, and in Scituate on November 2. Workshops are open to all who are interested in improving walkability. To register for a workshop or to obtain information about scheduling one in your community, please call Cathy Lewis at (617) 973-7118 or Jonathan Church at (617) 973-7097, or e-mail walkable@ctps.org.

Final MPO Documents Available

As reported in the September issue of *TRANSREPORT*, the Boston Region MPO has approved the fiscal years 2006–2010 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the fiscal year 2006 Unified Plan-



ning Work Program (UPWP), and an amendment to the 2004 Regional Transportation Plan. Final versions of these documents will be available later this month on CD, in print, and on audiotape. To request a copy of the documents,

contact the MPO at the Central Transportation Planning Staff: (617) 973-7100 (voice), (617) 973-7089 (TTY), or publicinformation@ctps.org (e-mail). The documents can be downloaded from www.ctps.org/bostonmpo/resources/reports.

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TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE ACTION ITEMS

The Boston Region MPO's Transportation Planning and Programming Committee approved three reports at its September 15 meeting:

- *North Suburban Commuter-Oriented Transit Opportunities Study, Phase II* – This report further develops transit service improvements identified in the North Suburban Transit Opportunities Study, Phase I. The study area includes the towns of Bedford, Burlington, Reading, Stoneham, Wakefield, Wilmington, and Woburn. The report identifies specific markets of potential riders and includes ridership estimates, service routings, and schedules. For a copy of the document, contact Clinton Bench at (617) 973-7100 or at cbench@ctps.org.
- *South Shore Coalition Subregional Area Study* – The objectives of this study were to develop an understanding of the congestion, mobility, and safety concerns of the 11 communities in the South Shore Coalition subregion: Cohasset, Duxbury, Hanover, Hingham, Hull, Marshfield, Norwell, Pembroke, Rockland, Scituate, and Weymouth. It presents subregional profiles of characteristics such as population, employment, and development and identifies mobility concerns that are not addressed by planned projects or studies. For a copy of the report, contact Alicia Wilson at (617) 973-8008 or at awilson@ctps.org.
- *The Fiscal Year 2005 Title VI Report for the Boston Region* – This federally required document is a summary of Title VI-related MPO work that includes an assessment of current planning efforts and outlines steps that the MPO has taken, and will continue to take, to gather information from minority communities to be used in the decision-making process. To request a copy of the report, contact Jonathan Church at (617) 973-7100 or at jchurch@ctps.org.

The Committee also gave the go-ahead to begin working on two fiscal year 2006 National Transit Database projects on behalf of the MBTA: the Directly Operated Bus and Rail Passenger Miles and Boardings Estimates, and the Purchased Bus Transportation Passenger Miles and Boardings Estimates.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL UPDATE

In September Advisory Council members and guests heard two local organizations' viewpoints on transportation issues affecting the Boston region. The Arborway Committee shared its views on the Executive Office of Transportation's recommendation to not move forward with the restoration of trolley service to the Arborway in Jamaica Plain, and the Sierra Club presented its position on the MBTA's Silver Line Phase III project.

At the October meeting members and guests are tentatively scheduled to hear a presentation by MPO staff and MassHighway on project development and the project readiness criteria used in the development of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). See page 6 for details.

ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE MBTA UPDATE

AACT has begun preparing for a special election to be held in November. The election is necessary because the current chair, Jim Oliver, has resigned his position due to illness. In the meantime April Maselli, the current vice chair, will serve as interim chair. The MBTA reported at the September AACT meeting that ridership on THE RIDE reached a record high in August. The service carried 121,389 passengers, up 8.9 percent from August 2004.

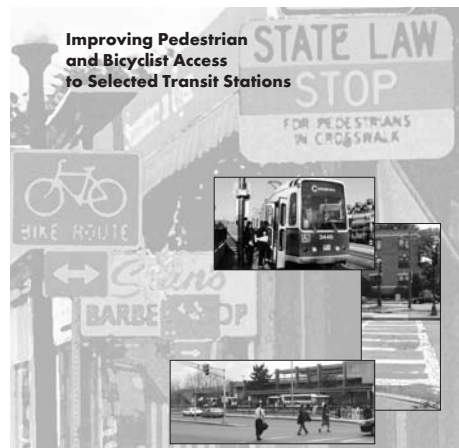
See the calendar on page 6 for details on the October meeting, which will include a presentation from Anna Barry, MBTA Director of Railroad Operations.

Study Looks at Pedestrian and Bicyclist Access to Transit Stations

Eighty-four percent of MBTA riders walk or bicycle to transit stations. Furthermore, approximately 54 percent of the population within the Boston metropolitan area resides within walking distance of transit service. Improving access to stations and providing desirable travel environments encourage travelers to use public transit and reinforce the behavior of people who already reach transit stations by bicycle and by foot.

Improvements that facilitate access to transit stations can yield increased use of existing transportation facilities and services at a low cost. For example, such improvements can lessen the need for more capital-intensive projects by reducing the need for parking spaces at park-and-ride lots.

In an effort to highlight the issues faced by pedestrians and bicyclists at many of the transit system's stations, the MBTA and MassHighway sponsored the study *Improving Pedestrian and Bicyclist Access to Selected Transit Stations*. The



study identifies small investments that can make significant improvements to pedestrian and bicyclist access in six MBTA transit station areas: Ayer Station (commuter rail), Boston College Station to Chestnut Hill Avenue (B Branch of the Green Line), Cleveland Circle and Reservoir stops (C and D branches of the Green Line), Forest Hills Station (Orange Line, commuter rail, and bus), Malden Center Station (Orange Line,

■ Access-to-Transit Study *cont. on p. 3*

Events in Boston Promote Walking

The City of Boston unveiled a new campaign in September to promote walking to tourists and residents: "Save Gas. Walk Boston." The first event of the campaign, "Sneakers on Statues," consisted of many of the city's most famous statues, including George Washington, Paul Revere, and Make Way for Ducklings, wearing shoes made by local artists to emphasize the many walkable attractions in the city.

The campaign's Web site features information on getting around Boston by foot and includes two promotional videos about Boston's walkability as well as an interactive game that converts gasoline dollars into a list of activity suggestions. For more information on the "Save Gas. Walk Boston" campaign, visit www.boston.com/walkboston.

In related news, WalkBoston, a non-profit membership organization dedicated to improving walking conditions in cities and towns across Massachusetts, will be holding a series of walking tours, "Fall Walks 2005," from September 24 through November 5. The tours include visits to some of the city's diverse neighborhoods and discussions about what works well for walkers and what does not. Walks are free for members and cost \$10 for nonmembers; registration is required. To register, contact WalkBoston at (617) 367-9255 or by e-mail at info@walkboston.org.

MBTA Provides Rail Service to Patriots Games

The MBTA will be operating commuter rail service to Gillette Stadium in Foxborough for New England Patriots games. There will be additional service from South Station and Providence Station to Foxborough, making stops along the way. The round-trip fare is \$10.00 (cash only—MBTA passes are not accepted). Tickets may be purchased on the train.



Commuter rail at Gloucester Station

Commuter Rail Coach Maintenance Program

The MBTA is about to undertake a maintenance program to improve the dependability of its commuter rail coach fleet.

The Coach Reliability and Safety Program (CRASP) will include 162 single-level coaches, which represents 43 percent of the commuter rail fleet.

CRASP will focus on repairing air conditioning, toilets, windows, wheels, and other mechanical systems. CRASP is programmed in the Boston Region MPO's Transportation Improvement Program in fiscal years 2005 and 2006.

The work will involve replacing coach components such as couplers, trucks, draft gear, toilet systems, and air conditioning systems with refurbished materials. The renovated coach returns to active service, and the components removed from it are refurbished and used as replacement parts for the next coach scheduled for overhaul. This work plan cuts in half the number of coaches out of service.

The work will be performed by the Massachusetts Bay Commuter Railroad (MBCR). MBCR, a partnership of three private transportation companies, has managed and operated the MBTA's commuter rail system since July 1, 2003.

Upgrades at Gloucester Commuter Rail Station

Commuter rail riders who use Gloucester Station now have better station access and new commuter parking. At a ribbon-cutting ceremony in September, local officials joined MBTA General Manager Daniel Grabauskas, Gloucester Mayor John Bell, and Congressman John Tierney to applaud the station overhaul.

Renovations to the station include the addition of 100 new parking spaces and enhanced lighting, station signage, fencing, drainage, and landscaping. The station's improvements include a pedestrian crosswalk with a Train Approach Warning System (TAWS). TAWS is a train-activated system, consisting of strobe lights, a horn, and an LED sign interface, designed to warn pedestrian traffic and awaiting drivers of approaching trains. The total cost of the improvement project was \$3.4 million.

With the opening of the new parking spaces in Gloucester, the MBTA has added a total of 300 new commuter rail parking spaces this summer, and it is planning to add 140 parking spaces in Westborough within the next few months. Gloucester Station is located on the Rockport commuter rail line and is served by 26 trains each weekday.

■ Access-to-Transit Study *from p. 2*

commuter rail, and bus), and Mansfield Station (commuter rail and bus). The candidates were chosen for analysis because the stations were representative of different transit modes, station characteristics, and geographic areas of the region.

Detailed in the report are improvements that would eliminate hazards for bicyclists and pedestrians, increase ease of access to the station from surrounding neighborhoods, or otherwise enhance the attractiveness of the station. The report also includes a summary that describes the types of issues encountered and provides general recommendations.

A field audit was conducted to examine

■ Access-to-Transit Study *cont. on p. 5*

A Smart-Growth Update

MASSACHUSETTS SMART GROWTH TOOLKIT

Tax incentives, zoning, and other local regulations play a critical role in determining housing affordability, promoting economic development, meeting transportation needs, and protecting community character and valuable natural resources. The Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA), on behalf of the agencies of the Office for Commonwealth Development, developed the Massachusetts Smart Growth Toolkit to provide support and inspiration to aid cities and towns in making the land-use decisions that will increase the tax base, promote economic development, and conserve land and water.

The twelve smart-growth techniques are:

- Agriculture Preservation
- Accessory Dwelling Units
- Brownfields Reuse
- Chapter 40R
- District Improvement/Tax Increment Financing
- Inclusionary Zoning
- Low-Impact Development
- Open Space Residential Design
- Traditional Neighborhood Development
- Transfer of Development Rights
- Transit-Oriented Development (See the article to the right for more information)
- Water Resources

In order to aid the implementation of smart-growth techniques, the Smart Growth Technical Assistance Program of EOEA offers grants to the commonwealth's municipalities and regional planning agencies in support of their efforts to implement land use regulations that are consistent with Massachusetts' Sustainable Development Principles. To see the Toolkit and a schedule of upcoming educational presentations, visit the Office for Commonwealth Development Web site at www.mass.gov/ocd.

COMMONWEALTH PROMOTES TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has several programs that encourage and support compact, walkable development centered around transit stations, known as transit-oriented development (TOD).

The TOD Infrastructure and Housing Support Program provides financial assistance for pedestrian improvements, bicycle facilities,

housing projects, and parking facilities within a quarter mile of transit stations.

Applications for this program are due by 5:00 P.M. Monday, November 14, 2005, at the Office for Commonwealth Development, 100 Cambridge Street, Suite 1010, Boston MA 02114, to the attention of Jane Healey, TOD Program Coordinator. A table will be set up on the mezzanine level (2nd floor) at 100 Cambridge Street from 1:00 to 5:00 P.M. on November 14 to accept hand-delivered applications. Two public information meetings on this program will be held in October (see calendar on page 6).

The Commercial Area Transit Node Housing Program (CATNHP) will provide \$10 million over five years to finance housing in commercial areas within a quarter mile of transit stations.

MassHousing, the state's affordable-housing bank, lends money at rates below conventional market rates to support housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income residents of the commonwealth.

Recently MassHousing established two

important funds to help spur TOD. Financing for Affordable Rental Housing is funded by MassHousing and administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).

This program has earmarked \$22 million to fund the development of new affordable rental housing near transit stations. Planning Assistance for Housing



Rendering of future development at Assembly Square

Production is also funded by MassHousing and is administered by DHCD. This program provides grants of up to \$50,000 per project for financial assistance for planning, education, outreach, financial feasibility analyses, and other planning activities related to increasing housing production through planning and zoning changes.

MassHousing is also working with the MBTA to provide construction financing and permanent financing for housing developments on land owned or controlled by the MBTA.

Chapter 40R Smart Growth Incentive Zoning provides direct payments to municipalities that adopt smart-growth overlay zoning districts in downtowns, in commercial centers, and around transit stations and issue building permits in these areas to create new opportunities for housing. Chapter 40R essentially provides incentive for rezoning around transit stations for higher densities, mixed use, reduced parking, and other changes to facilitate TOD.

For more information on these programs, visit www.mbta.com/projects_underway/tod.asp.



MPO Announces Suburban Mobility Program for 2006, Calls for Letters of Interest

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization has sounded the call for funding \$650,000 in projects under its Suburban Mobility Program by requesting letters of interest from eligible entities seeking to establish new or expanded suburban transit service. Letters outlining program requirements and the application and awards process were sent in September to the chief elected officials and planners in 85 communities in the region that are unserved or underserved by transit. Regional planning agencies and transportation management associations within and adjacent to the Boston Region MPO area also received application packages.

The MPO established the Suburban Mobility Program three years ago in an effort to reduce single-occupant-vehicle travel in suburban areas and to improve mobility within the region. Because the program is funded in the TIP under the federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program, candidate projects must demonstrate an ability to improve air quality.

Previous awards under this program went to:

- The Cape Ann Transportation Authority for a summer shuttle service in Essex and Ipswich
- The 128 Business Council to operate a shuttle service between the Anderson Regional Transportation Center and businesses and multi-unit housing in Woburn, Burlington, and Lexington
- The Town of Framingham to operate the Lift 9 service
- The Worcester Regional Transit Authority to operate a rider-request, zone-oriented service to locations in Marlborough and Southborough

The deadline for submitting a letter of interest to the MPO for funding under the third round of awards for the Subur-

ban Mobility Program is November 15 at 4:00 P.M. Questions about the program may be directed to Barbara Lucas, Chair of the Boston Region MPO Suburban Mobility Program and Transportation Demand Management Subcommittee, at blucas@mapc.org.

Online Regional Bicycle Plan Survey

Are you looking for an easy way to save on gas, get some exercise without going to the gym, and avoid sitting in traffic? Try riding a bicycle. Thousands of people in the Boston region are doing it already.

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), the regional planning agency for 101 cities and towns in eastern Massachusetts, is developing a new regional bicycle plan for the Boston Region MPO. The plan will present a strategy to make biking easier and safer. MAPC has produced an online survey to gather public input for the plan and learn citizens' opinions about the state of bicycling in the region.

Nearly 2,500 people have responded since the survey's release in late August. Most (76 percent) of them say that conditions for bicycling are only "fair" or "poor" in their community, although 74 percent are still riding at least once a week. Over a third ride almost every day.

Improving safety is a primary concern of respondents. When asked what would convince them to ride to work more often, 45 percent chose "If the route were safer for biking." Forty-seven percent said that if the route were safer they would bike more often for shopping trips or visiting friends.

What's your opinion? To take the survey and learn more about the regional bicycle plan, visit www.mapc.org/transportation/transportation_alternatives.html.

Full Amtrak Acela Service Returns

Amtrak is now operating eight Acela round-trips between Boston, New



York, and Washington, D.C., each weekday, increasing the weekday service to and from Boston by four round-trips.

Sunday Acela Express service has also increased. On September 25 Amtrak added three northbound departures from Washington, D.C., and one southbound departure from New York. Two of the northbound trains continue to Boston and one terminates in New York. On Sunday, October 2, Amtrak added two southbound departures from Boston operating through to Washington, D.C.

Acela Express service was suspended from April 15 to July 11 to accommodate the redesign, manufacture, and replacement of brake discs after the discovery of cracks in the rotors' spokes. The service has been gradually restored since it resumed on July 12.

■ Access-to-Transit Study *cont. from p. 3*

the physical, safety, and quality elements of walking and bicycling to each transit station. Overall, none of the study locations have issues that seriously impede the access of pedestrians and bicyclists to a transit station. However, conditions and facilities can be further improved to enhance the safety and quality of pedestrian or bicyclist access. Common issues of concern to pedestrians include: poor condition of sidewalks, crosswalks, and pavement striping; malfunctioning or inadequate signal timing and traffic signal hardware; and unwelcoming sidewalk and roadway design. For bicyclists, the audits revealed lacking or inadequate bicycle parking (racks) at stations; challenging, busy streets with on-street parking and debris; and poor connections between existing shared-use paths and the stations.

Improving Pedestrian and Bicyclist Access to Selected Transit Stations is available on www.bostonmpo.org.

MEETING CALENDAR

The public is welcome to attend the following transportation-related meetings. A photo ID is usually required for access to meeting sites.

AT THE STATE TRANSPORTATION BUILDING, 10 PARK PLAZA, BOSTON

Thursday, October 6
**Boston Region MPO
 Transportation Planning and
 Programming Committee
 Work Session** 10:00 A.M.
 CTPS Conference Room, Suite 2150

Wednesday, October 12
**Regional Transportation
 Advisory Council Freight
 Committee** 1:00 P.M.
 CTPS Conference Room, Suite 2150

**Regional Transportation
 Advisory Council** 3:00 P.M.
 Conference Rooms 2 and 3

Thursday, October 13
**Boston Region MPO
 Transportation Planning and
 Programming Committee Meeting** 10:00 A.M.
 CTPS Conference Room, Suite 2150

Friday, October 14
**Transit-Oriented Development
 Program Application Procedures** 2:00 P.M.
 Conference Room 1

Monday, October 24
**MBTA Rider Oversight
 Committee** 4:30 P.M.
 Conference Rooms 1, 2, and 3

Wednesday, October 26
**Water Transportation Advisory
 Council** 8:30 A.M.
 Conference Rooms 5 and 6

**Access Advisory Committee
 to the MBTA** 1:00 P.M.
 Conference Rooms 2 and 3

Thursday, November 3
**Boston Region MPO
 Transportation Planning and
 Programming Committee
 Work Session** 10:00 A.M.
 CTPS Conference Room, Suite 2150

Call (617) 222-5179 for date
MBTA Board of Directors 1:00 P.M.
 Conference Rooms 2 and 3

AT OTHER BOSTON AREA LOCATIONS

Monday, October 3
**MBTA Transportation Services
 for Senior Citizens and Customers
 with Disabilities** 2:00 P.M.
 Norwood Council on Aging
 275 Prospect Street, Norwood

Thursday, October 6
**MBTA Transportation Services
 for Senior Citizens and Customers
 with Disabilities** 2:00 P.M.
 Quincy City Hall
 2nd Floor Conference Room
 1305 Hancock Street, Quincy

Tuesday, October 11
**Charles River Basin Citizens
 Advisory Committee** 4:00 P.M.
*For meeting location, contact Charlotte Fleetwood
 at cxfleetw@bigdig.com.*

Tuesday, October 18
**Statewide Transportation
 Plan: A Framework for
 Thinking—A Plan for Action** 3:00 P.M.
 and 6:00 P.M.
 Lynn City Hall
 City Council Chamber
 3 City Hall Square
Document may be viewed at www.mass.gov/eot.

*Meeting dates and times are subject to change: please
 call (617) 973-7119 for confirmation. Additional
 transportation meetings open to the public are listed
 on the Boston Region MPO Web site, www.bostonmpo.org.*

Moving Together 2005

Attend Moving Together 2005, the annual statewide bicycle and pedestrian conference! There will be workshops, exhibits, speakers presenting current issues and initiatives, and discussions about shared experiences and strategies.

Moving Together 2005 will be held on Wednesday, October 19, at the Marriott Courtyard Tremont Hotel in Boston. Registration is \$35. To register, contact the Baystate Roads Program at (413) 545-2604 or www.ecs.umass.edu/baystate_roads/MT2005/.

TRANSREPORT

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*PUBLISHED BY THE BOSTON REGION
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