

# TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** January 18, 2024  
**TO:** Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization  
**FROM:** Stella Jordan, Public Engagement Program Manager  
**RE:** Summary of FFY 2023 Public Engagement Activities

## 1. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The core function of the Public Engagement Program (the Program) is to develop and implement strategies to facilitate inclusive public engagement and transparency in the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) planning and decision-making process. This is accomplished by providing timely and continuous public involvement opportunities and building relationships throughout the region to maximize the number of people who have the opportunity to participate, especially in communities that have been underrepresented in transportation planning and disproportionately impacted by planning outcomes.

The Program produces one of the MPO's federally required certification documents, the Public Engagement Plan (PEP), which outlines how the MPO meets its federal requirements for public participation. This includes ensuring that MPO meetings and events are open and accessible; information about MPO plans is communicated in a timely, transparent, and accessible manner; and members of the public have ample opportunities to get involved in the planning process through forums such as the Regional Transportation Advisory Council (Advisory Council). The PEP also outlines strategies and practices that exceed federal requirements, and the Program is guided by the principles described in the PEP of transparency, inclusion and equity, early and continuous public involvement opportunities, relationship building with diverse community members, and continuous evaluation and improvement.

Starting in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2022, the PEP committed to documenting the engagement activities conducted each FFY in order to assess the impacts of the Program's efforts over time. This is part of a broader programmatic shift towards data-informed monitoring and evaluation of engagement effectiveness that includes the identification and analysis of gaps and the development of corresponding strategies to address them.

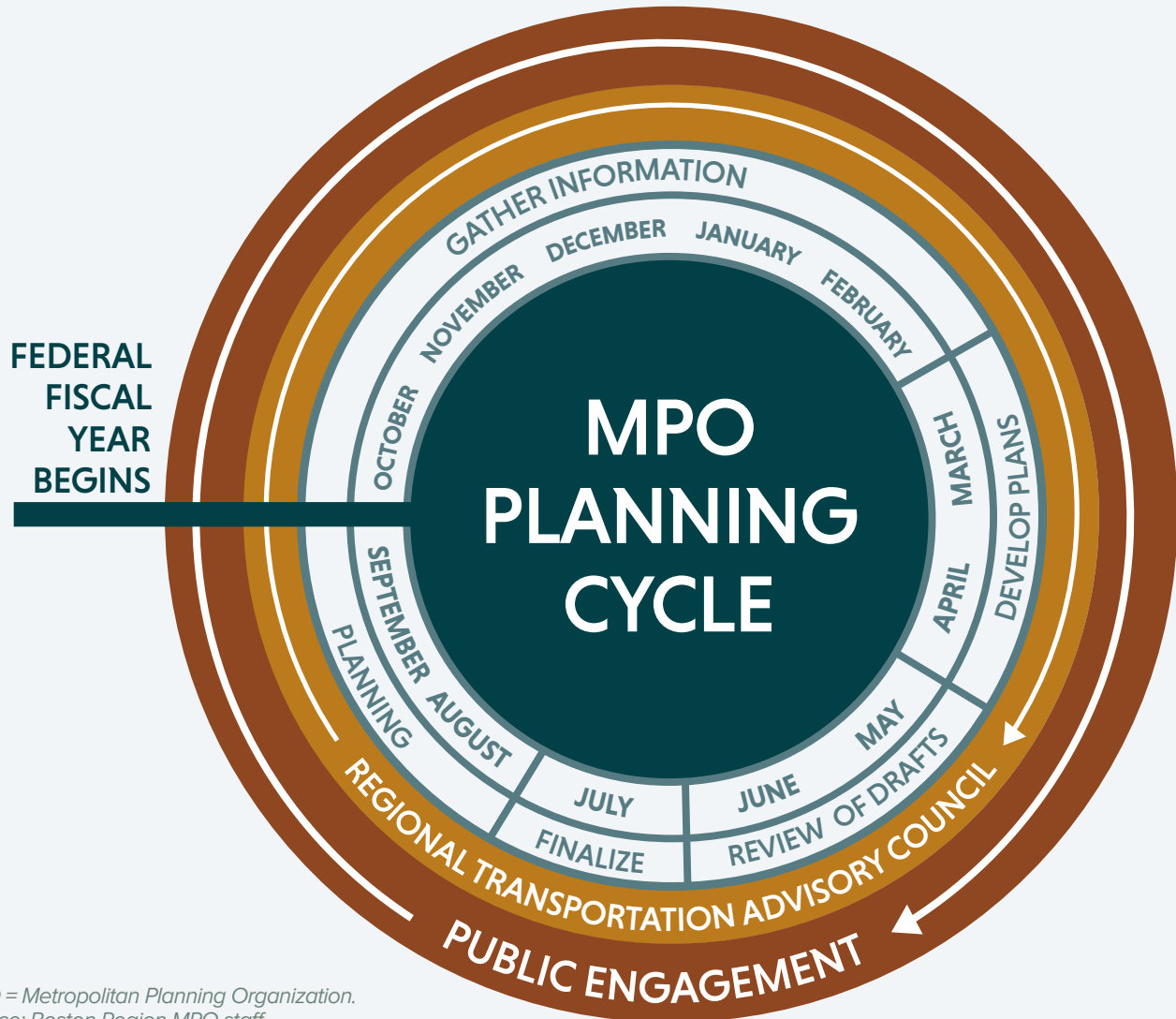
## 2. FFY 2023 OVERVIEW AND TIMELINE

FFY 2023 extends from October 1, 2022, to September 30, 2023. Each year, the MPO updates the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). Every four years, the MPO updates the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The development process for the current LRTP, Destination 2050, began in 2019 and was completed and endorsed in FFY 2023. The Program supported the development of all three of these core documents during FFY 2023 by ensuring that the MPO meets federal requirements for inclusive public participation, including seeking public feedback at key points in the decision-making process. Figure 1 illustrates the MPO planning cycle with standard development timelines and key engagement requirements for the MPO's federally required certification documents.

# public engagement program

## FIGURE 1

### MPO Planning Cycle



MPO = Metropolitan Planning Organization.  
Source: Boston Region MPO staff.

The Program also supported other MPO programs and projects in FFY 2023, including the Resilience Program, Transportation Equity Program, Bicycle and Pedestrian Support Program, Freight Program, and Multimodal Mobility Infrastructure Program, as well as discrete studies and the Coordinated Public Transit—Human Services Transportation Plan (Coordinated Plan), a document outlining strategies to meet human services transportation needs updated every four years along with the LRTP.

In addition, the Advisory Council was incorporated into the Program in FFY 2023; the Program provides administrative support to the Advisory Council's monthly meetings and related activities, while also collaborating on engagement and strategic planning to provide the Council members with opportunities to participate in MPO program development and planning efforts. Engagement staff also sought to connect engagement activities across programs and projects throughout FFY 2023 through comprehensive feedback tracking and information sharing, facilitating connections among stakeholders and staff, and developing holistic and forward-looking engagement strategies that prioritize relationship building and continuous public involvement in the MPO's work. Engagement staff hosted and attended meetings and events, developed physical and digital informational materials and activities, and employed social media, email, website, and survey tools to carry out all of these efforts.

## » 3. FFY 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

FFY 2023 saw the continued evolution of the Program that built on the goals established in FFY 2022 by the newly created and expanded Communications and Engagement team. Staff developed and deployed a wide variety of engagement strategies and tools, many of which were new to the program in FFY 2023, and others of which built upon strategies initiated and developed during FFY 2022 and previous years. These included approaches to relationship building with community-based organizations (CBO), the implementation of new processes to incentivize participation, more robust targeted outreach, and the incorporation of more in-person engagement strategies to complement virtual public engagement.

### » 3.1 RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Continuing the Program's focus on comprehensive and continuous (non-project-based) engagement with advocacy and CBOs and members of the public that was established in FFY 2022, building strong relationships grounded in trust, transparency, and mutual benefit was a central theme of work throughout FFY 2023. The theme was further refined and reinforced through a focus on the development of relationships around particular topics and theme areas across the MPO's work, including resilience, equity, and accessibility. Staff developed interest-based contact-tracking methods and targeted outreach for specific events to relevant interest-based stakeholder lists, in addition to new program and theme-specific engagement activities and involvement opportunities.

In the administration of the Advisory Council, for example, which normally discusses a variety of MPO programs, projects, and efforts at each meeting, staff sought to design meetings throughout FFY 2023 that were organized around a particular theme. This approach provided an accessible entry point to the group and to MPO work for newcomers, and offered a better opportunity for staff to invite stakeholders with particular areas of interest to help develop relationships. Examples include staff presentations and Advisory Council discussions and activities focused on transportation equity, climate resilience, and human services transportation.

Other examples of topical relationship-building activities include two workshops that staff held, one for human services transportation coordination (which informed the development of the Coordinated Plan) and one for resilience-focused project design and evaluation (which informed updates to the TIP project-scoring criteria). For both events, staff invited a variety of stakeholders representing advocacy and CBOs, municipalities, and agencies with interest in each topic area—some of whom were familiar with the MPO and some of whom were new contacts—to participate in discussions about specific transportation-related priorities and ways to address them both through MPO work and ongoing collaboration and MPO-supported connection building and problem solving.

All of these relationship-building efforts are grounded in a stakeholder framework that prioritizes engaging people and groups that are typically furthest away from the transportation planning process and may not be familiar with the MPO or its work; effectively engaging these stakeholders yields high-quality data about the transportation needs and concerns of the region's residents, and is key to an equitable planning process. Figure 2 illustrates the broad categories of stakeholders that staff engage, organized by proximity to the MPO planning process. Beyond the MPO Board, municipal and agency stakeholders (such as municipal TIP project proponents and transit providers) are traditionally the most closely connected to the MPO's work, while advocacy and CBOs and the public are generally much further removed from core planning and decision-making processes. While the Program supports connections and relationships across all stakeholder types, staff recognize that more effort, resources, and strategic planning are needed to effectively engage the outermost circles.

## FIGURE 2

### Public Engagement Stakeholder Categories and Proximity to MPO Planning Process



MPO = Metropolitan Planning Organization.  
Source: Boston Region MPO staff.

### » 3.2 EQUITY

As in previous years, the Program in FFY 2023 worked closely with the Transportation Equity Program and collaborated on the development of equitable engagement strategies and processes to reach members of Transportation Equity (TE) communities more effectively throughout the region who are not well represented in the MPO's planning and decision-making processes. These communities include people with limited English proficiency (LEP), people with low incomes, people who identify as minorities, people with disabilities, youth, and older adults. A major focus throughout FFY 2023 for both programs was the development of strategies that involved providing incentives to members of the public for participation in MPO engagement activities to recognize the value of their time and expertise to MPO work. In particular, these incentives may remove barriers by attracting people who typically have fewer resources to engage with the MPO.

However, incentives are not alone sufficient to engage successfully with disadvantaged populations. Other barriers, such as English-language ability, may also exist. Staff also developed contracts that streamline the process of getting translations and interpreter services. This allows staff to provide these

services more easily and expand engagement activities into communities that may have otherwise been challenging to reach.

An example of these strategies in FFY 2023 was the engagement conducted for an intersection safety study in the City of Lynn. When planning engagement, staff analyzed the demographic composition of the communities in the study area and consulted with Lynn city staff, including Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and Engagement staff, to determine equitable and effective strategies to engage communities that were primarily low income, minority, and substantially LEP. Staff planned four in-person tabling events in the study area, during which members of the public responded to surveys and engaged with an interactive mapping activity about their perceptions of the safety of the intersection. All materials were translated into Spanish, the primary non-English language spoken in the study area; interpreters were available; and staff helped participants fill out surveys with verbal responses where reading comprehension was an issue. Staff provided \$5 Dunkin Donuts gift cards to all participants. The use of gift card incentives, coupled with the availability of accessible translated materials and a variety of different ways to engage, proved effective in encouraging meaningful conversations and generating high-quality qualitative data from a highly diverse population sample for the study. The majority of people that staff interacted with during these engagement events identified as low income and minority, with a high proportion of respondents also identifying as having a disability. The high-quality qualitative data gathered from these activities informed staff's development of several recommendations to improve intersection safety.

Additional equity-focused strategies in FFY 2023 included the incorporation of more in-person engagement events and activities than previous years to supplement digital meetings and outreach tools. This shift addresses a recommendation from federal partners in the MPO's 2022 Certification Review to expand the variety of engagement tactics used to reach broader and more diverse audiences, as well as suggestions from several MPO stakeholders, including CBOs and members of the Advisory Council, that a combination of digital and in-person engagement opportunities would better serve their needs. Staff held three in-person tabling sessions during the public review period for the Destination 2050 LRTP over the summer, including at evening and weekend events. During these events, staff discussed Destination 2050's vision and goals for the region's transportation future, shared plain-language educational materials with translations, solicited comments with comment cards and poster boards with prompts, and used an interactive street design activity to prompt discussion about transportation priorities. Where needed, staff scheduled interpreters to more fully engage participants whose first language was not English. Staff attended several other in-person meetings and events held by stakeholder organizations throughout FFY 2023, and concluded the FFY with an Advisory Council field trip to visit the Massport Conley Shipping Terminal and discuss the region's freight transportation system.

More broadly, these tactics represent the development of an engagement program that is more flexible in understanding and incorporating community needs and stakeholder suggestions on effective outreach, and nimbler in creating and deploying a blend of digital and in-person strategies to meet people where they are. This flexibility is enabled by more robust analysis tools and equity-focused demographic analyses to identify gaps in the reach and effectiveness of engagement efforts, determine community contexts, and tailor engagement strategies accordingly.

### » 3.3 PEER EXCHANGE

Another highlight of FFY 2023 was the opportunity to exchange engagement strategies and best practices with other public engagement practitioners in the transportation sector, and enrich the MPO's Engagement Program with takeaways from these sessions. Staff collaborated with engagement staff from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council to plan and host a hybrid community engagement peer exchange funded by the Federal Highway Administration in July 2023. This event brought together engagement professionals from MPOs, state departments of transportation (DOT), and other planning agencies from

across the United States to discuss equitable engagement strategies and work through shared challenges. Four workshop-style sessions focused on investing in engagement, evaluating the effectiveness of engagement, building long-term relationships and partnerships, and facilitating across divides. Key takeaways from the event underscored the importance of building trust and relationships independent of particular projects or processes, compensating community members for their time and expertise to address and avoid inequities, and working to identify and document gaps in engagement to build transparency.

The United States Department of Transportation identified the Boston Region MPO as having notable public involvement and equity practices and invited staff from the Engagement and Transportation Equity Programs to participate in a peer exchange in August. Staff gained valuable insights during this event from other MPO and state DOT participants about innovative ways to identify and engage equity populations and elevate their needs in the planning process, and valued the opportunity to elevate several projects and processes in the Boston region as examples of best practices for other agencies across the country.

## » 4. BY THE NUMBERS

Engagement in FFY 2023 focused on building and deepening relationships and creating space for meaningful conversations and connections, while also expanding the reach of the MPO's work through surveys and events. The following metrics represent a significant increase in both engagement activities and public participation from FFY 2022.

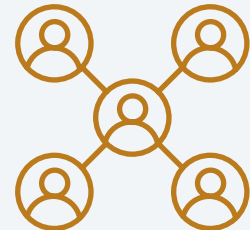
### » 4.1 MEETINGS AND EVENTS



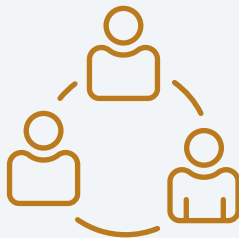
**2 virtual workshops held**  
47 attendees total



**3 in person event tablings**  
Engaged over 200 people total



**13 subregional meetings held or attended**



**4 in person pop-up activities**  
Engaged over 50 people total



**8 virtual program events held**





**65 individual/small group meetings held**

Mostly with CBOs

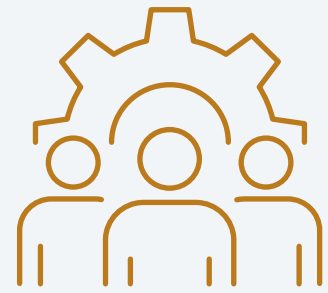
**~150% increase** from FFY 2022



**17 community meetings attended**

Mostly held by CBOs

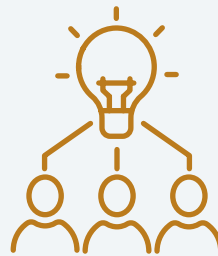
**~180% increase** from FFY 2022



**10 partner agency engagement events attended**



**15 engagement-related webinars, conferences, professional development events attended**



**1 engagement peer exchange co-hosted**



**16 Regional Transportation Advisory Council meetings and events held**

## » 4.2 SURVEYS



**4 regionwide public planning surveys**

L RTP, Coordinated Plan, UPWP

**~1650 responses**



**4 multimodal study surveys**

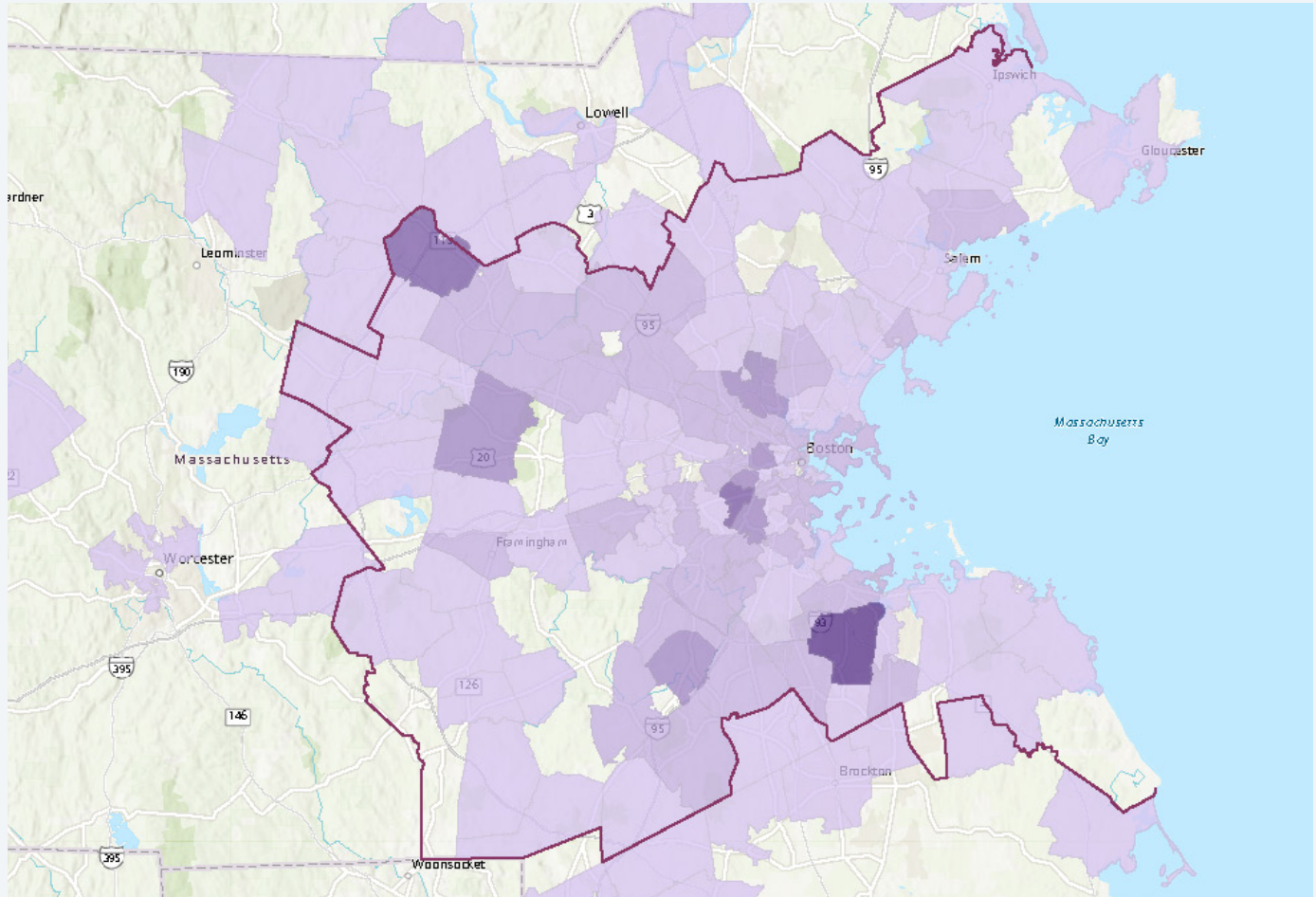
**~1050 responses**

Staff included a standard set of optional zip code and demographic questions in all public surveys, and used the responses to these questions to comprehensively track the reach of engagement efforts. Beyond the number of responses to a given survey, understanding what types of people are responding and from where helps staff identify gaps in engagement and work towards more equitable representation.

Figure 3 represents the aggregate geographic distribution of respondents to all surveys conducted in FFY 2023 at the zip code level. It is important to note that of the eight surveys conducted in FFY 2023, five were distributed throughout the region and three were geographically specific corridor or intersection surveys, which account for some of the concentration of responses in certain zip codes. There are several zip codes that are not represented in FFY 2023 survey responses. Staff will address these geographical gaps in engagement through targeted outreach strategies in FFY 2024 and subsequent years, which will also be informed by demographic analysis, discussed below.

## FIGURE 3

### Geographic Distribution (by Zip Code) of FFY 2023 Survey Responses



FFY = federal fiscal year.

Source: Esri, Boston Region MPO staff.

### FFY 2023 Survey Responses by Zip Code

#### Number of Responses

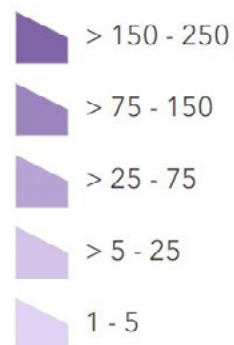
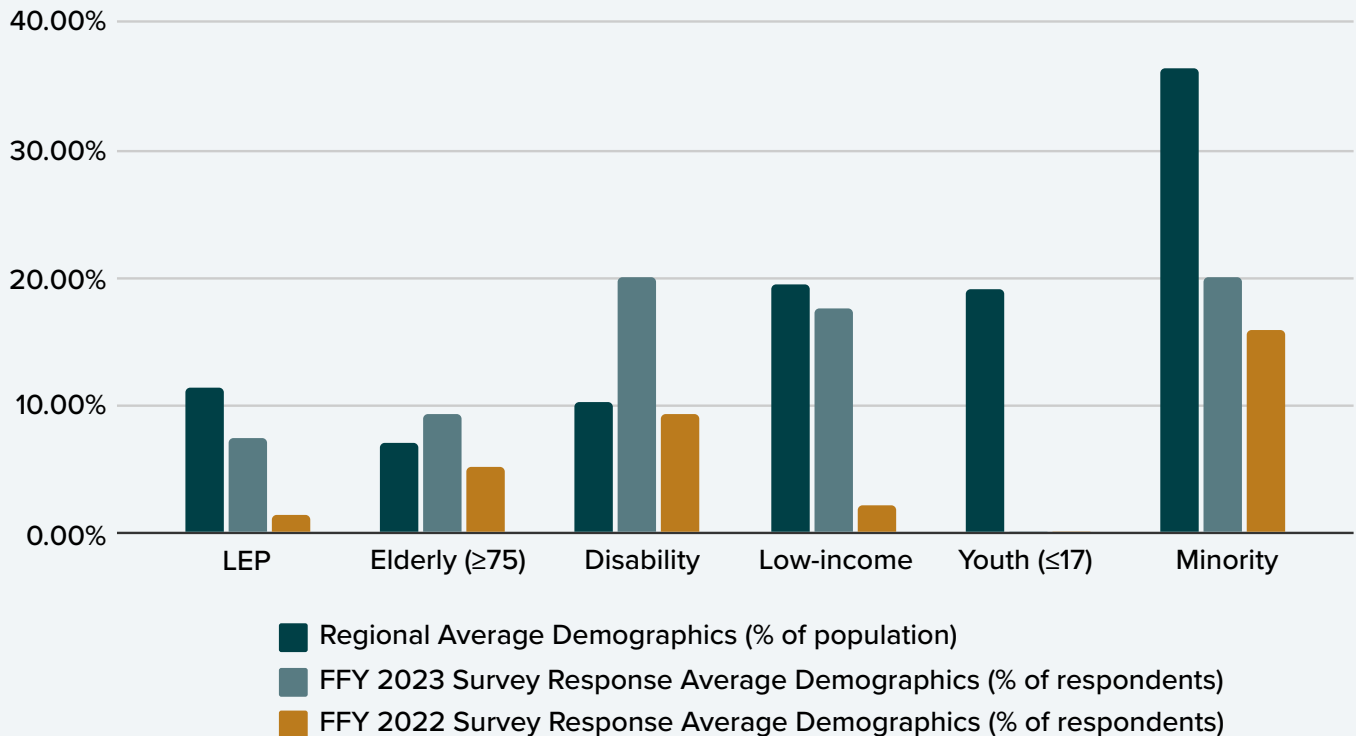




Figure 4 shows aggregate demographic responses from all surveys conducted in FFY 2023 (percent of respondents who self-identified as members of TE populations) compared to aggregate demographic responses from corridor surveys in FFY 2022 and demographic data for the entire region. Figures 5, 6, and 7 illustrate the distribution of FFY 2023 survey responses in relationship to the distribution of minority populations, people with LEP, and people with low incomes in the Boston region, respectively, and also highlight the locations of in-person engagement activities conducted in FFY 2023.

## FIGURE 4

### FFY 2023 Survey Respondent Demographic Comparisons

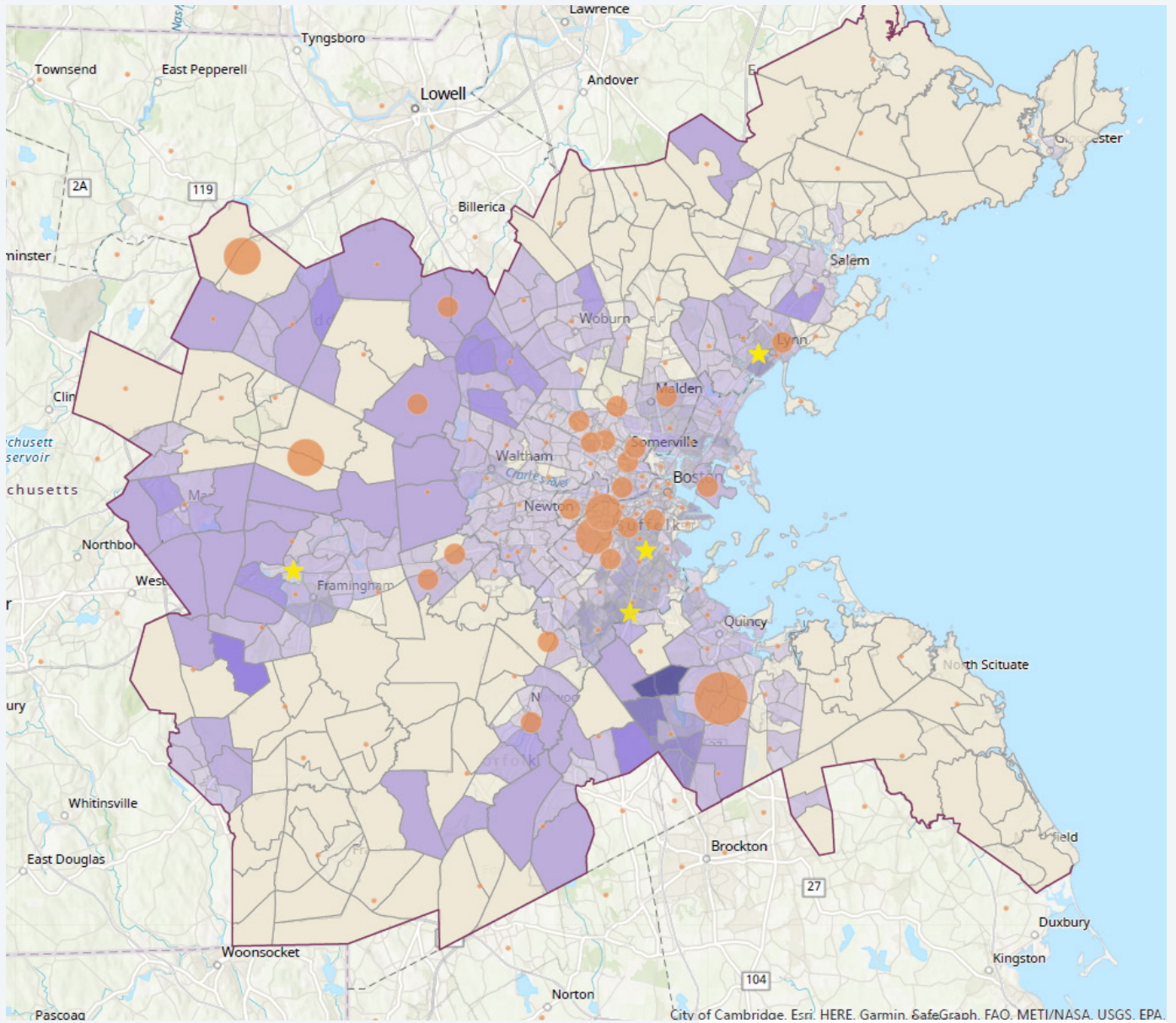


FFY = federal fiscal year. LEP = limited English proficiency.

Source: 2020 US Census, 2018-2022 American Community Survey, Boston Region MPO staff.

# FIGURE 5

## FFY 2023 Survey Response and In-Person Event Distribution in Relation to Minority Population



FFY = federal fiscal year.  
 Source: Esri, Boston Region MPO staff, 2020 American Community Survey.

**MPO Boundary**

**FFY23 Survey Response by Zip Code**

Number of Responses

- > 110 - 230
- > 50 - 110
- > 10 - 50
- 0 - 10

**Percent Minority**

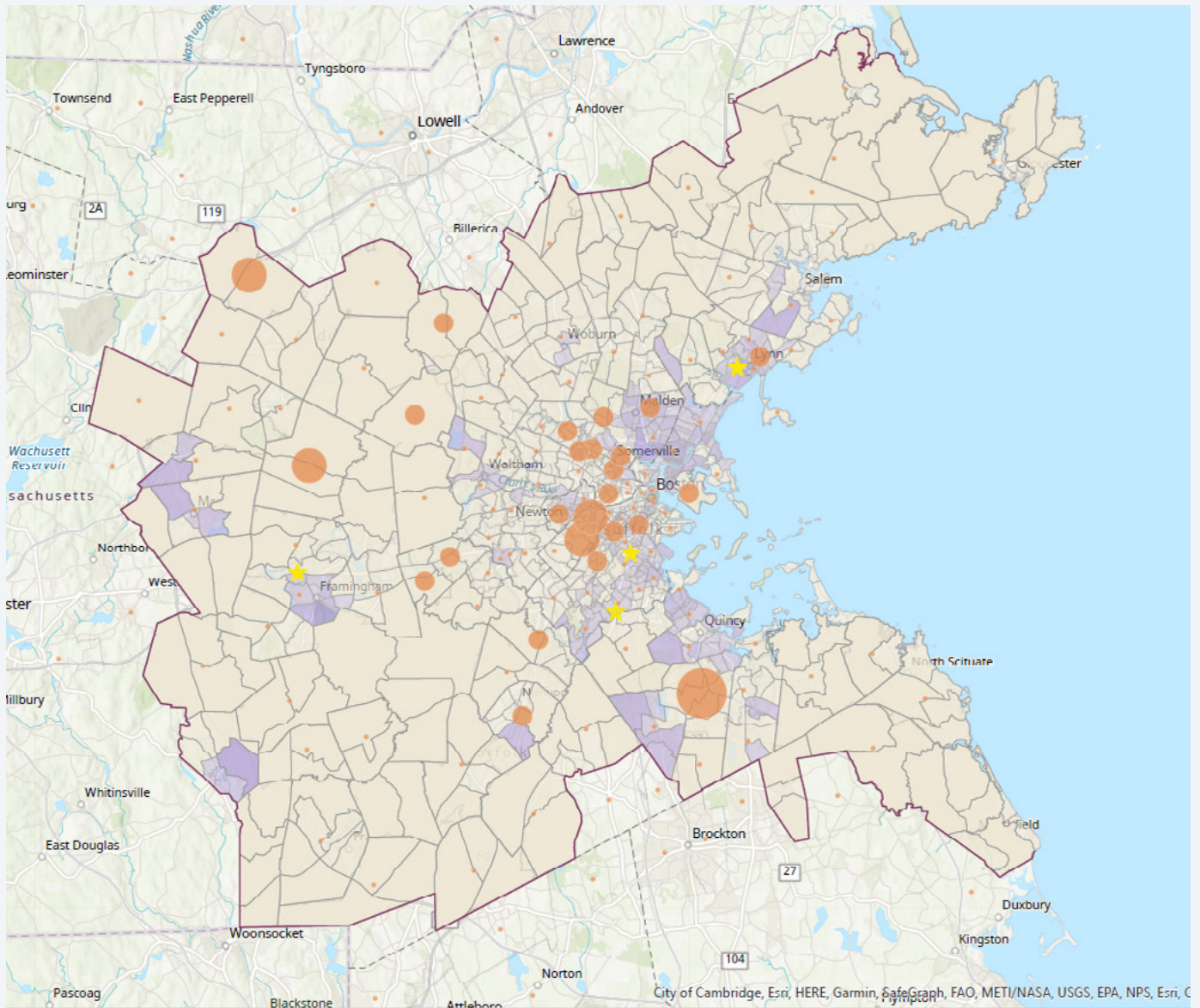
Percent Minority

- > 80 - 100
- > 60 - 80
- > 40 - 60
- > 20 - 40
- 0 - 20

**FFY23 In-Person Events**

# FIGURE 6

## FFY 2023 Survey Response and In-Person Event Distribution in Relation to LEP Population



FFY = federal fiscal year; LEP = limited English proficiency.  
 Source: Esri, Boston Region MPO staff, 2020 American Community Survey.

**MPO Boundary**

**FFY23 Survey Response by Zip Code**

**Number of Responses**

- > 110 - 230
- > 50 - 110
- > 10 - 50
- 0 - 10

**Percent Limited English Proficiency (LEP)**

**Percent LEP**

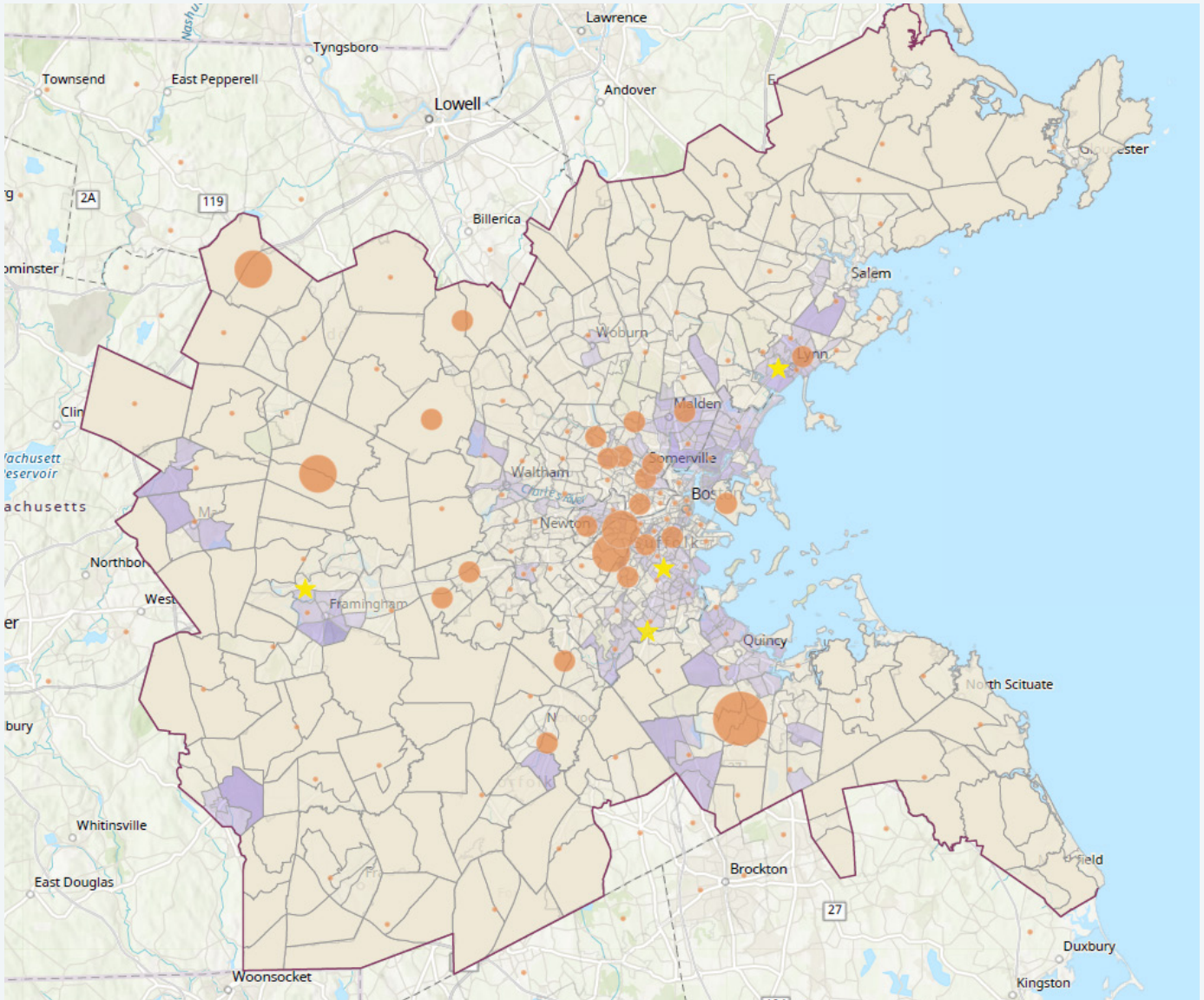
- > 51.4 - 64
- > 38.5 - 51.4
- > 25.7 - 38.5
- > 12.8 - 25.7
- 0 - 12.8

**FFY23 In-Person Events**



# FIGURE 7

## FFY 2023 Survey Response and In-Person Event Distribution in Relation to Low-Income Population



FFY = federal fiscal year. Source: Esri, Boston Region MPO Staff, 2020 American Community Survey.

### MPO Boundary



### Percent Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

### FFY23 Survey Response by Zip Code

#### Number of Responses

- > 110 - 230
- > 50 - 110
- > 10 - 50
- 0 - 10

#### Percent LEP

- > 51.4 - 64
- > 38.5 - 51.4
- > 25.7 - 38.5
- > 12.8 - 25.7
- 0 - 12.8

### FFY23 In-Person Events



While FFY 2023 saw an overall increase in the representation of TE populations in surveys from FFY 2022 and a particular increase in engagement with people with disabilities, these data also highlight that the MPO needs to do more to engage youth, minority populations, and people with LEP, especially outside of the inner core. Addressing these gaps is a key goal in the development of engagement strategies for FFY 2024 and subsequent years, and will be pursued via targeted, geographic and demographic data-informed survey engagement, as well as through relationship building and the implementation of complementary strategies such as partnerships with CBOs, in-person engagement events, and providing incentives for survey respondents.

## » 4.3 COMMUNICATIONS

All of these engagement activities were supported by a suite of communication tools including MailChimp (email), X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, and LinkedIn. Where meeting, event, and survey engagement seeks to draw people into the MPO's work, build relationships, and gather input, communications enable these connections by directing clear and accessible information outwards.

### EMAIL

Staff use the MailChimp platform to manage contacts and email lists and send timely email communications about MPO engagement opportunities, including messages about upcoming meetings and events and details about public comment periods and other participation opportunities. In FFY 2023, staff sent 125 emails to MPO email lists via MailChimp that were opened approximately 86,000 times, representing an increase in overall email engagement from FFY 2022.

### MAILCHIMP



### SOCIAL MEDIA

Staff connect with stakeholders and disseminate information about public involvement opportunities via social media. In FFY 2023, staff primarily used X (formerly Twitter) and LinkedIn. Staff occasionally shared content on Facebook as well, but the usefulness of the platform has declined over the past few years as modifications to Facebook's algorithm have created a pay-to-play environment that limits the visibility of organic content.

As of the end of FFY 2023, the Boston Region MPO (@BostonRegionMPO) had 1,513 followers on X (formerly Twitter) and approximately 35,000 impressions on the platform during that year. X continues to be an essential platform for the dissemination of engagement content, despite impressions being down



52 percent compared to FFY 2022 and follower growth slowing to two percent compared to FFY 2022. Changes to the platform since 2022 have led staff to explore opportunities to cultivate a presence for the MPO on other social media platforms such as Threads.

LinkedIn is becoming an increasingly important element of the MPO's social media presence. The MPO's following on the platform increased by 49 percent compared to FFY 2022, and impressions during FFY 2023 grew to approximately 12,900. Staff sees an opportunity to continue to expand the organization's activity on LinkedIn as a way of connecting with professional planners, advocates, and thought leaders.

## ↘ 5. PROGRESS TOWARD GOALS

The [FFY 2022 Engagement Program Summary Memo](#) established several goals for the program for FFY 2023, including expanding relationships and partnerships with CBOs, increasing connections for stakeholders to all elements of MPO work, increasing in-person engagement, improving relationship management and tracking methods, and building staff capacity for engagement work.

In FFY 2023, staff made substantial progress towards those goals. Expanding relationships and developing partnerships with CBOs led to closer connections across programs and projects. For example, several organizations participated directly in LRTP development (through workshops and one-on-one meetings) and also engaged with discrete studies, such as the FFY 2023 Sustainability and Decarbonization in the Freight and Logistics Sector in the North Suffolk Area study, and workshops, such as the Resilience Scoring Criteria Workshop. These organizations were able to be involved in shaping work at earlier stages and gain better understandings of the connections between different areas of MPO work. Deeper relationships with CBOs that serve and support LEP communities in particular also enabled staff to gain a better understanding of community contexts before engaging with community members and prepare appropriate materials and resources to engage more effectively.

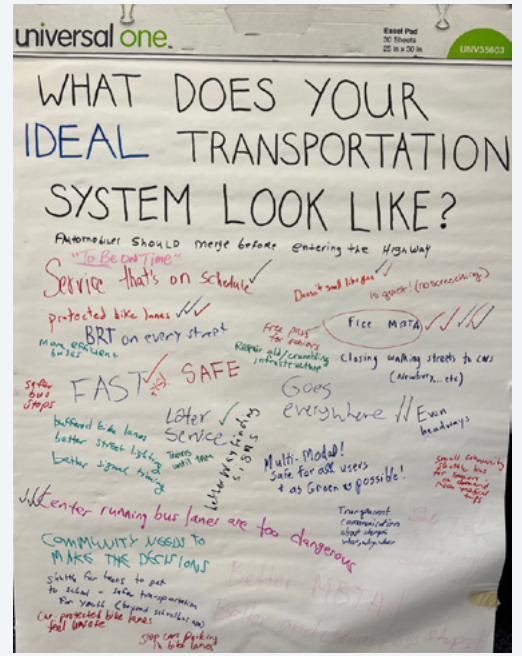
Similarly, a focus on relational engagement across MPO work led to more effective engagement throughout the development cycle of discrete studies. The FFY 2022 study, [Addressing Equity and Access in the Blue Hills Reservation](#), offered staff a novel opportunity for robust follow up in the subsequent FFY through several meetings with members of the study's advisory group and other stakeholders, including meetings to support follow-up work on the study's recommendations and share the study's results with community members in the study area. The study received considerable media attention in FFY 2023, and staff had the opportunity to discuss it—and the MPO's work more broadly—on several local media platforms and at two transportation planning conferences. On the other side of the study lifecycle, staff were able to support more robust engagement during the scoping process for the previously mentioned FFY 2023 freight decarbonization study by highlighting upcoming work to stakeholders and bringing them onboard sooner. Staff were also able to explore more varied and creative methods for public engagement for studies to better meet the needs of communities in the study area, such as working with DEI staff in the City of Lynn to identify and carry out equitable and accessible in-person engagement activities for the FFY 2023 Lynn intersection study.

Staff attended several in-person events in FFY 2023, connecting directly with members of the public, including members of traditionally harder-to-reach communities (several events took place in areas where a majority of residents identify as low income, people of color, and/or having LEP). These connections were facilitated by the use of a variety of engagement tools and activities, including tactile games, interactive maps, vision boards, and comment cards. Staff also provided monetary incentives for in-person engagement in Lynn to enhance equity and effectiveness, which was a program first. Through these events staff was able to collect direct input for long-range planning work, better understand the needs and priorities of community members, share information and resources about the MPO and its planning process, and build foundations for more substantive, effective, and equitable engagement strategies. Figure 8 is a collage of photos taken at in-person events during FFY 2023.



# FIGURE 8

Photos from In-Person Events, FFY 2023





Staff continued to explore new tools and identify best practices to improve relationship management and engagement tracking. Staff met with representatives of relationship management and engagement software companies to better understand the available technologies and tools, held internal multiteam workshops to better understand staff needs and priorities for contact and engagement tracking, and initiated conversations with data and equity staff about developing mapping tools, dashboards, and workflows for identifying gaps in engagement and tracking the effectiveness of engagement activities. All of these conversations continue in FFY 2023.

To build capacity for further engagement work, staff secured internal approval in FFY 2023 to hire an additional staff member to support the Program. A new hire joined the Communications and Engagement Staff in the first quarter of FFY 2024.

## » 6. IMPACTS OF ENGAGEMENT

While it is difficult to quantify the exact impacts of engagement efforts on the MPO's planning and decision-making, particularly given the more qualitative, relationship-focused framework the Program has developed in FFY 2023, several points stand out.

Destination 2050, being finalized in FFY 2023, offered staff a valuable opportunity to take a high-level, holistic look at four years of engagement activities and inputs that fed into the plan, as well as highlight the connections between components of the plan to support the plan's development and implementation. One of those components, the Destination 2050 vision, goals, and objectives, was shaped significantly by public input and feedback. Specifically, staff conducted a regionwide public survey to collect feedback and ideas for the Destination 2050 vision, goals, and objectives, asking respondents to describe their ideal transportation system and identify key issues affecting the future of the region's transportation system. Staff received approximately 800 responses to this survey, highlighting public priorities including reliability and connectivity of transit, safety for all modes, and climate resilience; these informed the drafting of the Destination 2050 goals and objectives for safety, mobility and reliability, access and connectivity, resiliency, and clean air and healthy communities, among others. In addition, staff held two workshops with the Advisory Council to help shape the language used for the Destination 2050 vision statement and goal and objective descriptions. Survey and workshop feedback was shared with the MPO Board to inform its discussions and ultimate endorsement of the final [Destination 2050 vision, goals, and objectives](#).

Alongside the development of Destination 2050, staff supported the development of the 2023 Coordinated Plan during FFY 2023. Plan development involved collecting and analyzing the transportation needs and priorities of older adults and people with disabilities and identifying strategies to improve transportation for those groups. A key element of this engagement was a workshop that staff hosted on human services transportation coordination, which brought together human services transportation providers, staff of municipal Councils on Aging and Disability Commissions, and local and state human services agencies and advocates. In past years, the MPO received feedback indicating that human services transportation stakeholders felt the Coordinated Plan and related MPO work effectively documented needs, but was insufficient at supporting coordinated and comprehensive efforts to address those needs; in response, staff structured the workshop to focus on forward-looking strategies and actions that participants could pursue collaboratively. Staff also used notes from the workshop discussions to incorporate more strategies and actions into the final Coordinated Plan, and took suggestions from workshop participants to other planning efforts, including discussions about how the MPO can support more continuous and constructive human services transportation conversations outside of the Coordinated Plan development cycle.

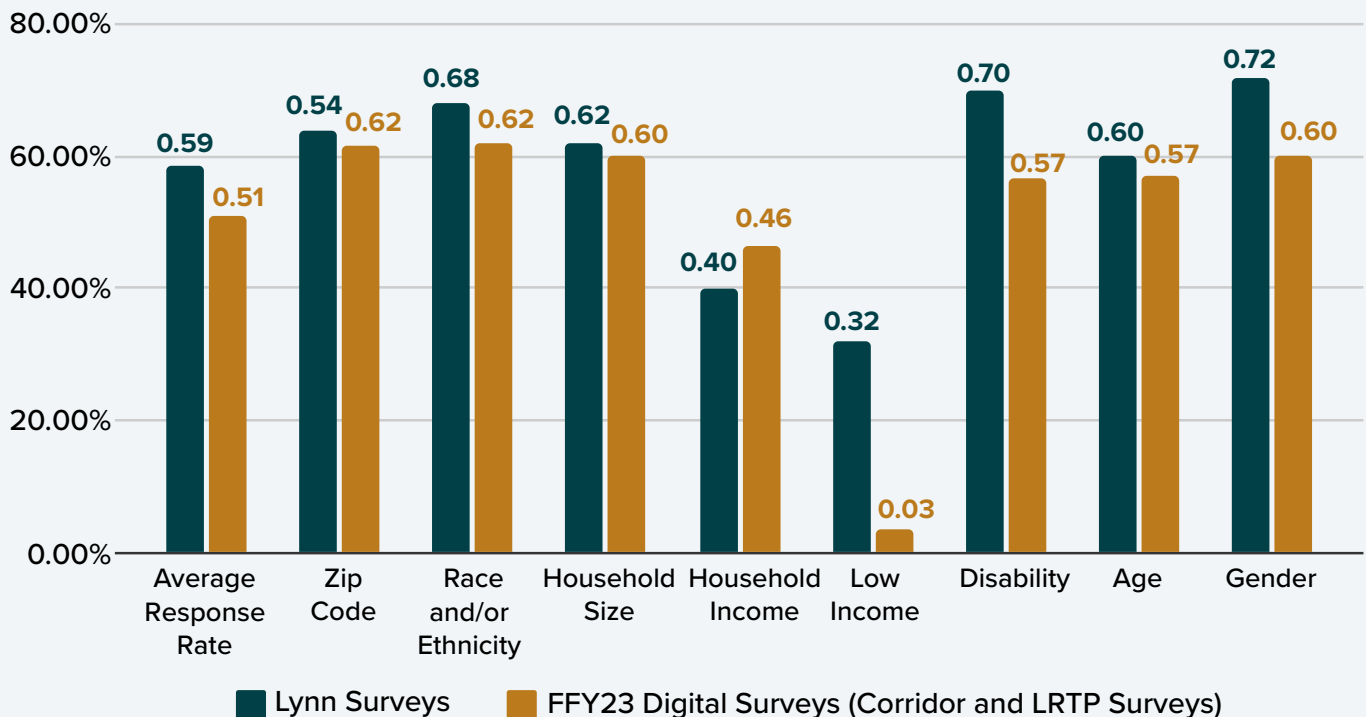
With the establishment of a new Resilience goal area in Destination 2050, staff conducted targeted engagement in FFY 2023 to inform resilience-focused updates to the TIP's project-scoring criteria. Staff held a workshop with environmental stakeholders, including advocates, CBOs, municipalities, and state

agencies, to discuss priorities for resilient project design and implementation and develop ideas to evaluate transportation projects more effectively with resilience in mind. Subsequent updates to the MPO's internal project-scoring criteria comprehensively incorporated workshop feedback. Staff then developed a guidebook for municipal planners to encourage resilient project design with examples of best practices and local priorities that drew directly from workshop feedback, offering a prime example of effective engagement impacting both internal policymaking and external resource development to improve multiple facets of a core MPO process.

Another impact of engagement in FFY 2023 was the development of internal processes to support the provision of compensation and incentives for public participation, something CBO stakeholders raised to staff's attention in FFY 2022. In FFY 2023 staff piloted the use of gift card incentives for in-person surveying, and laid the groundwork for formal partnerships with CBOs in FFY 2024 to collaborate on incentivized engagement activities. Staff experience in FFY 2023 underscored the depth and quality of survey responses and conversations that the use of incentives helped generate; compared to typical non-incentivized digital surveying, people were more willing to have longer conversations and share more personal details in the incentivized setting, and were notably more likely to complete the section of optional demographic questions that are included in all MPO surveys. Figure 9 shows a comparison of the percentage of respondents in Lynn who answered demographic questions to the percentage of respondents to other FFY 2023 digital surveys who answered demographic questions; response rates for Lynn surveys were higher across every question type.

## FIGURE 9

### Comparison of Demographic Question Response Rates for Lynn Surveys



FFY = federal fiscal year. LRTP = Long-Range Transportation Plan.  
Source: Boston Region MPO staff.

## 7. GOALS FOR FFY 2024

The Program will continue to focus on building and deepening relationships with CBOs, particularly those representing and serving equity communities. The development of more formal partnerships, including via the use of incentives, will be an integral part of this relationship building and will enable staff to reach broader and more diverse networks of community members who have not previously engaged with the MPO.

As shown in Figures 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, several gaps in digital survey engagement were identified during FFY 2023, including representation from youth, minority populations, and people with LEP. More broadly, despite year-over-year progress on expanding the reach of public engagement, the metrics for all program engagement activities outlined in this memorandum are supplemented by internal contact tracking data that reflect a high level of repeat participation from stakeholders who are already highly engaged with MPO processes, and less participation from those who are not. A key goal for the Program in FFY 2024 and beyond is to develop strategies and tools to address these gaps. These will include more comprehensive and effective data collection and analysis tools, as well as the relationship-building efforts discussed above. In particular, the Program will focus on expanding varied, equity-focused engagement methods tailored to community conditions and preferences. This focus is supported by expanded federal guidance such as the United States Department of Transportation's recently updated [Promising Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-Making](#) report that encourages the use of program funds for participation incentives, contracting with CBOs to conduct engagement, and providing food and childcare at public meetings.

Throughout FFY 2024 and into FFY 2025, Program staff will support the MPO's development of a regional Vision Zero Action Plan. Staff will facilitate meetings with CBOs and advocates; support the Vision Zero Task Force in its work to provide input into the development of the Plan; and contribute to public forums for discussions about roadway safety issues.

Other FFY 2024 program goals include working with the Advisory Council to expand membership and increase effectiveness, and completing a comprehensive update of the PEP to better align it with strategies and best practices that staff are implementing and with the program goals and areas of focus outlined in this memorandum.



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*By Telephone:*

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