



CHAPTER 2

Transportation Planning and the Boston Region MPO

This chapter explains the transportation-planning process in the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) area and the composition of the Boston Region MPO.

Decisions about how to spend transportation funds in a metropolitan area are guided by information and ideas garnered from a broad group of people, including elected officials, municipal planners and engineers, transportation advocates, and other interested people. MPOs are the bodies responsible for providing a forum for this decision-making process. Each metropolitan

area in the United States with a population of 50,000 or more—also known as an urbanized area—has an MPO, which decides how to spend federal transportation funds for capital projects and planning studies for the area.

2.1 THE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS

The federal government regulates the funding, planning, and operation of surface transportation through the federal transportation program (enacted into law through Titles 23 and 49 of United States Code). The most recent reauthorization of the surface transportation law is called the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act.

FAST Act legislation, as with previous federal transportation laws, sets policies related to metropolitan transportation planning. The law requires all MPOs to carry out a continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative (3C) transportation-planning process.

2.1.1 3C Transportation Planning

Title 23, Section 134 of the Federal-Aid Highway Act and Section 5303 of the Federal Transit Act, as amended, require that urbanized areas, in order to be eligible for federal funds, conduct a 3C transportation-planning process, resulting in plans and programs consistent with the planning objectives of the metropolitan area. The Boston Region MPO is responsible for carrying out the 3C planning process in the Boston region and has established the following objectives for the process:

- Identify transportation problems and develop possible solutions.
- Balance short- and long-range considerations so that beneficial incremental actions adequately reflect an understanding of probable future consequences and possible future options.
- Represent both regional and local considerations, as well as both transportation and non-transportation objectives and impacts, in the analysis of project issues.
- Assist implementing agencies in effecting timely policy and project decisions with adequate consideration of environmental, social, fiscal, and economic impacts, and with adequate opportunity for participation by other agencies, local governments, and the public.
- Help implementing agencies to prioritize transportation activities in a manner consistent with the region's needs and resources.
- Comply with the requirements of the FAST Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the Clean Air Act (CAA), the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 12898 (regarding environmental justice), Executive Order 13166 (regarding outreach to populations with limited English-language proficiency), and Executive Order 13330 (regarding the coordination of human-services transportation).

As part of its 3C process, the Boston Region MPO annually produces the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). These documents, along with the quadrennial Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), are referred to as Certification Documents (described in Section 2.1.2), and are required for the MPO's process to be certified as meeting federal requirements; this certification is a prerequisite for receiving federal transportation funds. In addition to the requirement to produce the LRTP, the TIP, and the UPWP, the MPO must establish and conduct an inclusive public participation process, as well as maintain transportation models and data resources to support air quality conformity determinations and long- and short-range planning work and initiatives.

2.1.2 Certification Documents

An essential aspect of maintaining an open and transparent 3C transportation planning and programming process in conformance with federal and state requirements and guidelines is the development of the MPO's certification documents.

- The **LRTP** guides investment in the transportation system of the Boston metropolitan region for the next 25 years. It defines an overarching vision of the future of transportation in the region, establishes goals and objectives that will lead to the achievement of that vision, and allocates projected revenue to transportation projects and programs consistent with established goals

and objectives. The Boston Region MPO produces an LRTP every four years. *Charting Progress to 2040*, the current LRTP, was endorsed by the MPO in 2015 and guided the development of this document.

- The **TIP** is a multiyear, multimodal program of transportation improvements that is consistent with the LRTP. It describes and prioritizes transportation projects that are expected to be implemented during a five-year period. The types of transportation projects funded include major highway reconstruction and maintenance, arterial and intersection improvements, public transit expansion and maintenance, bicycle paths and facilities, and improvements for pedestrians. The TIP contains a financial plan that shows the revenue source or sources, current or proposed, for each project. The TIP serves as the implementation arm of the MPO's LRTP, and the Boston Region MPO updates the TIP annually. An MPO-endorsed TIP is incorporated into the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) for its submission to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and the Environmental Protection Agency for approval.
- The **UPWP** contains information about surface transportation planning studies that will be conducted by MPO staff. Generally, the work described throughout the following chapters has a scope defined by the current federal fiscal year (FFY) from October 1st through September 30th. The UPWP also describes all of the supportive planning activities undertaken by the MPO, including data resources management, preparation of the federally required certification documents, and ongoing regional transportation planning assistance. The UPWP is produced annually and the UPWP can be a good way for transportation projects and alternatives to be studied before they are advanced for further design, construction, and possible future programming through the TIP. As described throughout this document, the studies and work products programmed for funding through the UPWP are integrally related to other planning initiatives conducted by the Boston Region MPO as well as by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), the Massachusetts Port Authority (Massport), the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), and the municipalities.

2.2 THE BOSTON REGION MPO

The Boston Region MPO consists of a 22 voting member board that includes state agencies, regional organizations, and municipalities; its jurisdiction extends from Boston north to Ipswich, south to Duxbury, and west to Interstate 495. There are 101 cities and towns that make up this area (see Chapter 1, Figure 1-1).

The permanent MPO voting members are:

- MassDOT
- MAPC
- MBTA

- MBTA Advisory Board
- Massport
- City of Boston
- Regional Transportation Advisory Council (Advisory Council)

The elected MPO voting members are municipalities. A municipality from each of the eight MAPC subregions has a seat, and there are four at-large municipal seats. The current elected members are:

- City of Beverly – North Shore Task Force
- City of Braintree – South Shore Coalition
- City of Everett – At-Large City
- City of Newton – At-Large City
- City of Somerville – Inner Core Committee
- City of Woburn – North Suburban Planning Council
- Town of Arlington – At-Large Town
- Town of Bedford – Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination
- Town of Framingham – MetroWest Regional Collaborative
- Town of Lexington – At-Large Town
- Town of Medway – SouthWest Advisory Planning Committee
- Town of Norwood – Three Rivers Interlocal Council

In addition, the FHWA and the FTA participate in the MPO as advisory (nonvoting) members. Figure 2-1 shows MPO membership and organization of the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS), staff to the MPO. Details about MPO voting members are provided below.

MassDOT was established under Chapter 25 (“An Act Modernizing the Transportation Systems of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts”) of the Acts of 2009. It includes four divisions: Highway, Rail and Transit, Aeronautics, and Registry of Motor Vehicles. The MassDOT Board of Directors, comprised of 11 members appointed by the Governor, oversees all four divisions and MassDOT operations, including the MBTA. The MassDOT Board was expanded to 11 members by the legislature this year based on a recommendation by Governor Baker’s Special Panel, comprised of transportation leaders, which was assembled to review structural problems with the MBTA and deliver recommendations for improvements. MassDOT has three seats on the MPO including the Highway Division and the MBTA.

The Highway Division of MassDOT has jurisdiction over the roadways, bridges, and tunnels of the former Massachusetts Highway Department and the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority. The Highway Division also has jurisdiction over many bridges and parkways previously under the authority of the Department of Conservation and Recreation. The Highway Division is responsible for the design, construction, and maintenance of the Commonwealth's state highways and bridges. It is also responsible for overseeing traffic safety and engineering activities for the state highway system. These activities include operating the Highway Operations Control Center to ensure safe road and travel conditions.

The Rail and Transit Division oversees MassDOT's freight and passenger rail program, and provides oversight of Massachusetts's 15 regional transit authorities (RTAs), as well as intercity bus, MBTA paratransit (THE RIDE), and a statewide mobility-management effort.

The **MBTA**, created in 1964, is a body politic and corporate, and a political subdivision of the Commonwealth. Under the provisions of Chapter 161A of the Massachusetts General Laws (MGL), it has the statutory responsibility within its district of operating the public transportation system, preparing the engineering and architectural designs for transit development projects, and constructing and operating transit development projects. The MBTA district comprises 175 communities, including all of the 101 cities and towns of the Boston Region MPO area. In April 2015, as a result of a plan of action to improve the MBTA, a five-member Fiscal and Management Control Board (FMCB) was created. The FMCB will enforce new oversight and management support, and increase accountability over a three-to-five-year time frame. The goals will target governance, finance, and agency structure and operations through recommended executive and legislative actions that embrace transparency and develop stability in order to earn public trust. By statute, the MBTA FMCB consists of five members, one with experience in transportation finance, one with experience in mass transit operations and three who are also members of the MassDOT Board.

The **MBTA Advisory Board** was created by the Massachusetts Legislature in 1964 through the same legislation that created the MBTA. The Advisory Board consists of representatives of the 175 cities and towns that compose the MBTA district. Cities are represented by either the city manager or mayor, and towns are represented by the chairperson of the board of selectmen. Specific responsibilities of the Advisory Board include review of and comment on the MBTA's long-range plan, the Program for Mass Transportation (PMT), proposed fare increases, and the annual MBTA Capital Investment Program; review of the MBTA's documentation of net operating investment per passenger; and review of the MBTA's operating budget. The MBTA Advisory Board advocates for the transit needs of its member communities and the riding public.

Massport has the statutory responsibility under Chapter 465 of the Acts of 1956, as amended, for planning, constructing, owning, and operating such transportation and related facilities as may be necessary for the development and improvement of commerce in Boston and the surrounding metropolitan area. Massport owns and operates Boston Logan International Airport, the Port of Boston's Conley Terminal, Cruiseport Boston, Hanscom Field, Worcester Regional Airport, and various maritime/waterfront properties, including parks in East Boston, South Boston, and Charlestown.

The **MAPC** is the regional planning agency for the 101 cities and towns in the MAPC/MPO region. It is composed of the chief executive officer (or her/his designee) of each of the 101 cities and towns in the MAPC region, 21 gubernatorial appointees, and 12 ex-officio members. It has statutory responsibility for comprehensive regional planning in its region under Chapter 40B of the MGL. It is the Boston Metropolitan Clearinghouse under Section 204 of the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966 and Title VI of the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act of 1968. Also, its region has been designated an economic development district under Title IV of the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965, as amended. MAPC's responsibilities for comprehensive planning include responsibilities in the areas of technical assistance to communities, transportation planning, and development of zoning, land use, demographic, and environmental studies. MAPC activities that are funded with federal metropolitan transportation planning dollars are included in this UPWP.

The **city of Boston, six elected cities (currently Beverly, Braintree, Everett, Newton, Somerville, and Woburn), and six elected towns (currently Arlington, Bedford, Framingham, Lexington, Medway, and Norwood)** represent the 101 municipalities in the Boston Region MPO area. The city of Boston is a permanent MPO member and has two seats. There is one elected municipal seat for each of the eight MAPC subregions and four seats for at-large elected municipalities (two cities and two towns). The elected at-large municipalities serve staggered three-year terms, as do the eight municipalities representing the MAPC subregions.

The **Regional Transportation Advisory Council**, the MPO's citizen advisory group, provides the opportunity for transportation-related organizations, non-MPO member agencies, and municipal representatives to become actively involved in the decision-making processes of the MPO as it develops plans and prioritizes the implementation of transportation projects in the region. The Advisory Council reviews, comments on, and makes recommendations regarding certification documents. It also serves as a forum for providing information on transportation topics in the region, identifying issues, advocating for ways to address the region's transportation needs, and generating interest among members of the general public in the work of the MPO.

Two members participate in the Boston Region MPO in an advisory (nonvoting) capacity, reviewing the LRTP, the TIP, the UPWP, and other facets of the MPO's planning process to ensure compliance with federal planning and programming requirements:

- The **FHWA and the FTA** oversee the highway and transit programs, respectively, of the U.S. Department of Transportation under pertinent legislation and the provisions of the FAST Act.

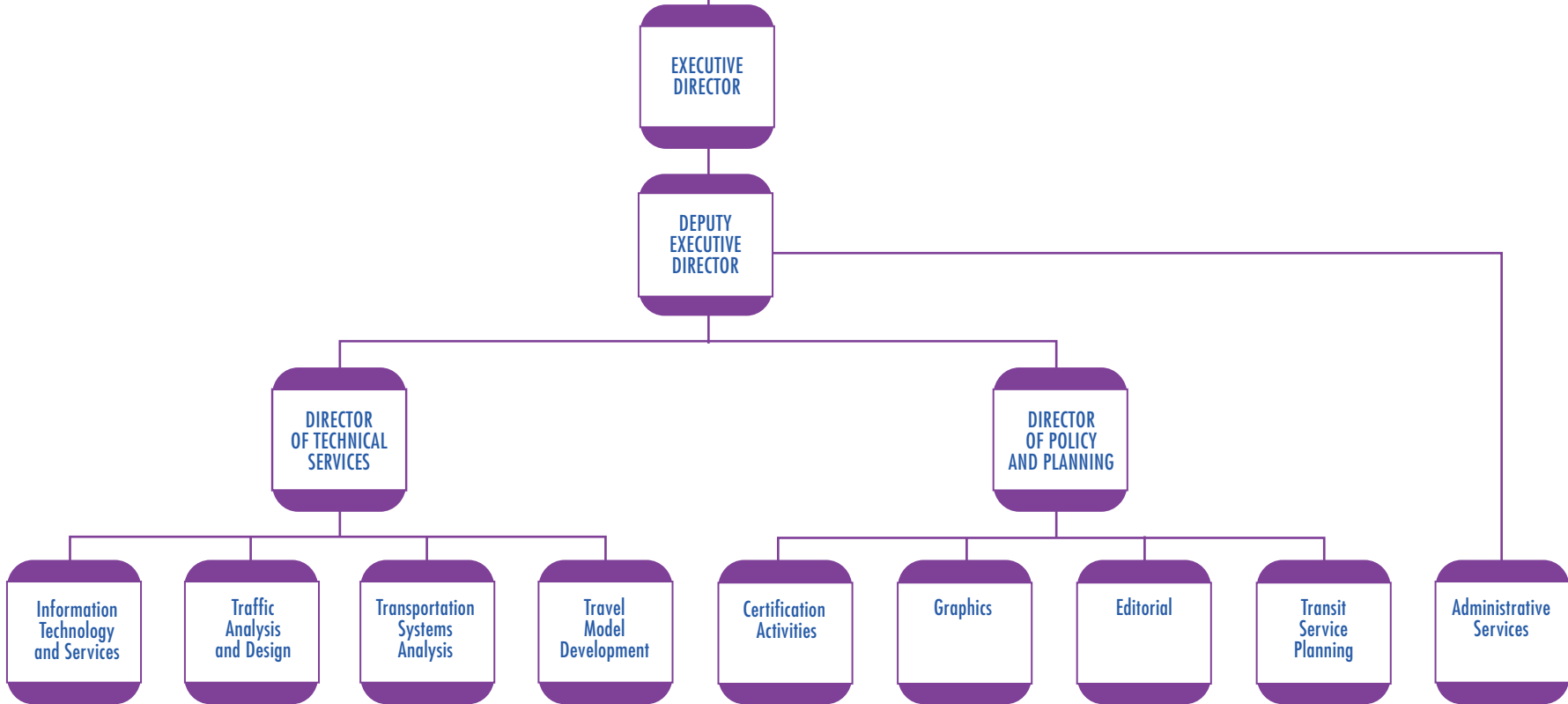


This page intentionally blank

MEMBERSHIP OF THE BOSTON REGION METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION



CENTRAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING STAFF





This page intentionally blank