



BOSTON REGION METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Jamey Tesler, MassDOT Secretary and CEO and MPO Chair
Tegin L. Teich, Executive Director, MPO Staff

TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 23, 2021
TO: Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization
FROM: Róisín Foley, MPO Staff
RE: Updated MPO Municipal Election Process Survey Results

Between January and May 2021, the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) conducted a survey regarding its annual election process. The goal of the survey was to gauge opinions about the MPO's election process among the 97 municipalities in the Boston region. These municipalities are eligible to stand for election to the MPO board and to vote in the annual elections. The MPO conducted this survey per a recommendation that was included in the MPO's triennial review process by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in 2019. As part of that review process, the federal agencies recommended that the MPO review its existing voting procedures to ensure that effective engagement of all municipalities in the region are effectively represented.

As outlined in the MPO's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) and the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Advisory Board jointly administer the annual MPO elections. The MPO has 12 elected municipal members: two at-large town representatives, two at-large city representatives, and eight cities or towns to represent each of the eight MAPC subregions. Election terms are for three years, and each year four of the 12 seats are up for election. Chief elected officials of the municipalities in the region vote in the elections, which are held at MAPC's Fall Council Meeting.

Below are the results of the survey. The results have been stratified to show responses from MPO board member municipalities versus responses from non-MPO board member municipalities. Responses that did not indicate a municipality were removed. Responses from Scituate were reduced from 11 to 5 to reduce the influence of one municipality on the overall dataset.

Civil Rights, nondiscrimination, and accessibility information is on the last page.

SURVEY RESULTS

Question 1: What is your role in your municipality?

**Table 1
Respondent's Role in Municipality**

Answer Choices	MPO Board Member Municipality Responses	MPO Board Member Municipality Percentage	Non-MPO Board Member Municipality Responses	Non-MPO Board Member Municipality Percentage
Municipal planning/community/economic development staff	11	50%	22	37%
Municipal department of public works staff	4	18%	10	17%
Elected official	2	9%	16	27%
Town manager/administrator	1	5%	4	7%
Volunteer	1	5%	0	0%
Other (individual answers below)	3	14%	6	10%
Total	22	100%*	60	100%*

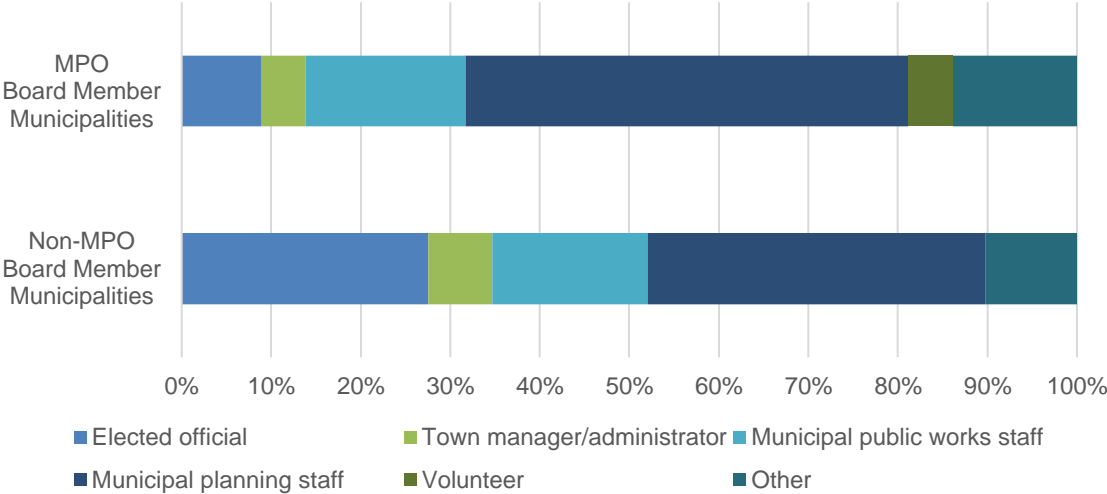
[*Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.]

Other

- Responses from MPO board member municipalities:
 - o Appointed official
 - o Town manager's office staff
 - o Designated MPO representative

- Responses from non-MPO board member municipalities:
 - o MBTA Advisory Board designee (3 responses)
 - o Appointed official
 - o Mayor's office
 - o Executive assistant to select board

Figure 1
Respondent's Role in Municipality



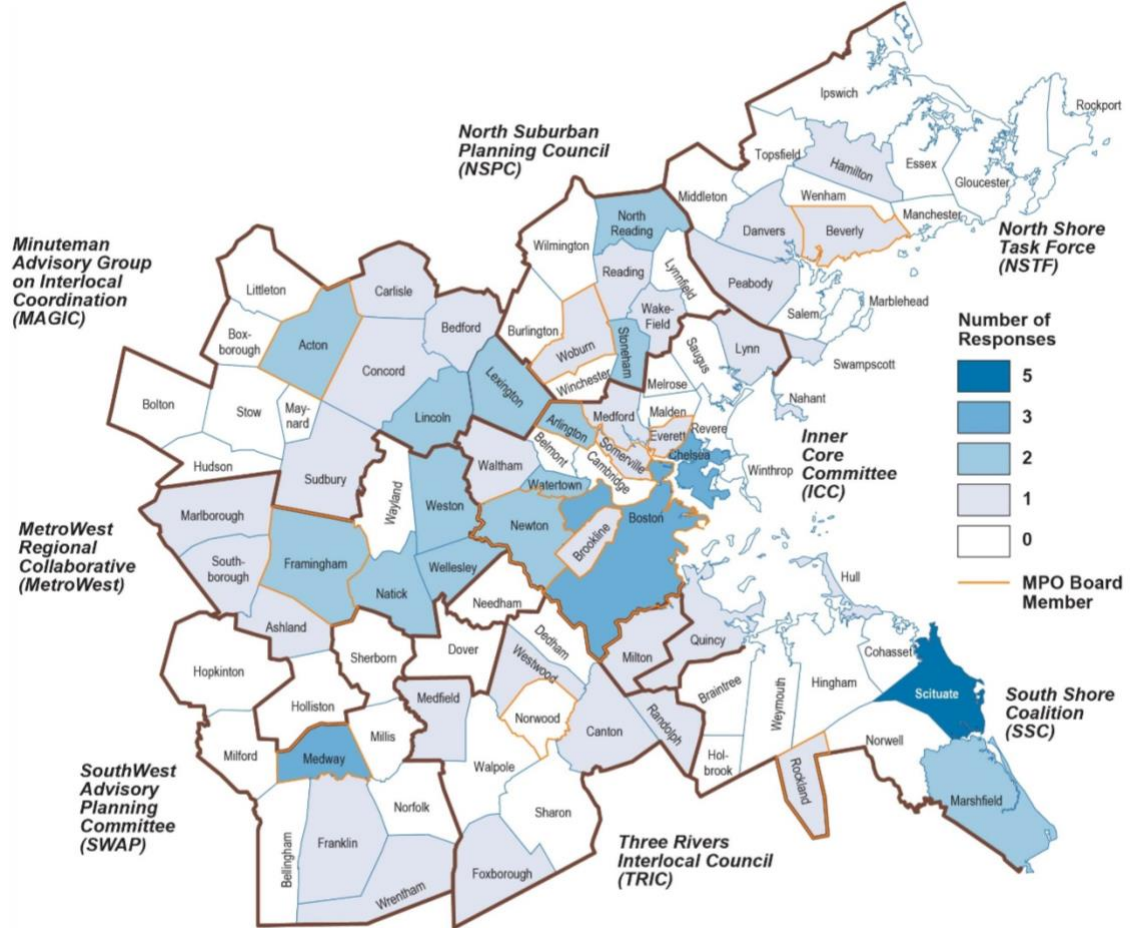
Question 2: What municipality do you represent or work for?

**Table 2
Municipality Respondent Represents**

MPO Board Member Municipality	Non-MPO Board Member Municipality	Responses from Each Municipality
	Scituate	5
Boston, Medway	Chelsea	3
Acton, Arlington, Framingham, Newton, Norwood	Lexington, Lincoln, Marshfield, Natick, Needham, North Reading, Stoneham, Watertown, Wellesley, Weston	2
Beverly, Brookline, Everett, Rockland, Somerville, Woburn	Ashland, Bedford, Belmont, Canton, Carlisle, Concord, Danvers, Foxborough, Franklin, Hamilton, Hull, Lynn, Marlborough, Medfield, Medford, Milton, Nahant, Peabody, Quincy, Randolph, Reading, Southborough, Stoughton, Sudbury, Swampscott, Wakefield, Waltham, Westwood, Wilmington, Winchester, Wrentham	1
Total		82

Note: Stoughton is no longer in the Boston Region MPO's planning area.
MPO = Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Figure 2 Map of Municipality Respondent Represents



Question 3: Have you heard of the Boston Region MPO?

**Table 3
Respondent's Awareness of the Boston Region MPO**

Answer Choices	MPO Board	MPO Board	Non-MPO	Non-MPO
	Member	Member	Board	Board
	Municipality	Municipality	Municipality	Municipality
	Responses	Percentage	Responses	Percentage
Yes	20	91%	56	93%
No	2	9%	4	7%
Total	22	100%	60	100%

MPO = Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Question 4: How familiar are you with the Boston Region MPO?

**Table 4
Respondent's Familiarity with the Boston Region MPO**

Answer Choices	MPO Board	MPO Board	Non-MPO	Non-MPO
	Member	Member	Board	Board
	Municipality	Municipality	Municipality	Municipality
	Responses	Percentage	Responses	Percentage
Very familiar	18	82%	26	43%
Somewhat familiar	3	14%	26	43%
Not at all familiar	1	5%	8	13%
Total	22	100%*	60	100%*

MPO = Metropolitan Planning Organization.

[*Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.]

Question 5: Please describe your municipality’s experiences with the Boston Region MPO. Check all that apply.

**Table 5
Municipality's Experiences with the Boston Region MPO**

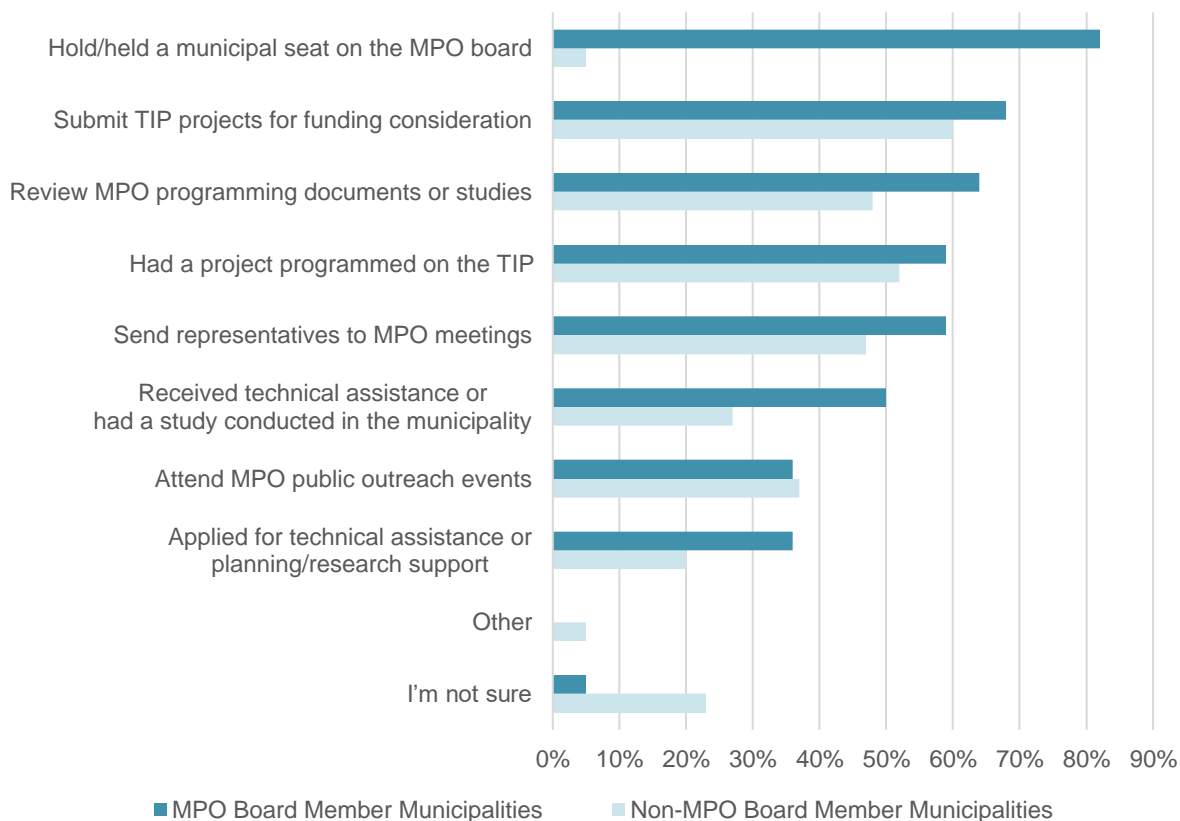
Answer Choices	MPO Board Member Municipality Responses	MPO Board Member Municipality Percentage	Non-MPO Board Member Municipality Responses	Non-MPO Board Member Municipality Percentage
Hold/held a municipal seat on the MPO board	18	82%	3	5%
Submit TIP projects for funding consideration	15	68%	36	60%
Review MPO programming documents or studies	14	64%	29	48%
Had a project programmed on the TIP	13	59%	31	52%
Send representatives to MPO meetings	13	59%	28	47%
Received technical assistance or had a study conducted in the municipality	11	50%	16	27%
Attend MPO public outreach events	8	36%	22	37%
Applied for technical assistance or planning/research support	8	36%	12	20%
Other (individual answers paraphrased below)	0	0%	3	5%
I'm not sure	1	5%	14	23%
Answered	22		60	

MPO = Metropolitan Planning Organization. TIP =Transportation Improvement Program.

Other (individual answers)

- Responses from non-MPO board member municipalities:
 - o Communication with MAPC team on initiatives and data
 - o Limited experience
 - o None

**Figure 3
Municipality's Experiences with the Boston Region MPO**



MPO = Metropolitan Planning Organization. TIP =Transportation Improvement Program.

Question 6: How familiar are you with the process of running for an elected municipal seat on the Boston Region MPO board?

**Table 6
Respondent's Familiarity with the Process of Running for an Elected Municipal Seat on the Boston Region MPO Board**

Answer Choices	MPO Board	MPO Board	Non-MPO	Non-MPO
	Member	Member	Board	Board
	Municipality	Municipality	Member	Member
	Responses	Percentage	Municipality	Municipality
			Responses	Percentage
Very familiar	14	64%	10	17%
Somewhat familiar	6	27%	20	33%
Not at all familiar	2	9%	30	50%
Total	22	100%	60	100%

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Question 7: How familiar are you with voting in the election for municipal seats on the Boston Region MPO board?

Table 7
Respondent's Familiarity with the Process of Voting in the Election for Municipal Seats on the Boston Region MPO Board

Answer Choices	MPO Board Member Municipality		Non-MPO Board Member Municipality	
	Responses	Percentage	Responses	Percentage
Very familiar	13	59%	15	25%
Somewhat familiar	7	32%	18	30%
Not at all familiar	2	9%	27	45%
Total	22	100%	60	100%

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Question 8: To the best of your knowledge, has the municipality you represent or work for voted in the Boston Region MPO municipal elections in the past five years?

Table 8
Municipality's Participation in Voting in the Boston Region MPO Municipal Elections in the Past Five Years

Answer Choices	MPO Board Member Municipality		Non-MPO Board Member Municipality	
	Responses	Percentage	Responses	Percentage
Yes	19	86%	24	40%
No	0	0%	9	15%
I don't know	3	14%	27	45%
Total	22	100%	60	100%

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Question 9: If you replied “no” to the previous question, why has the municipality you represent or work for not voted in the Boston Region MPO elections in the past five years? Check all that apply.

**Table 9
Reasons Why Non-MPO Board Member Municipality Has Not Voted in the Boston Region MPO Elections in the Past Five Years**

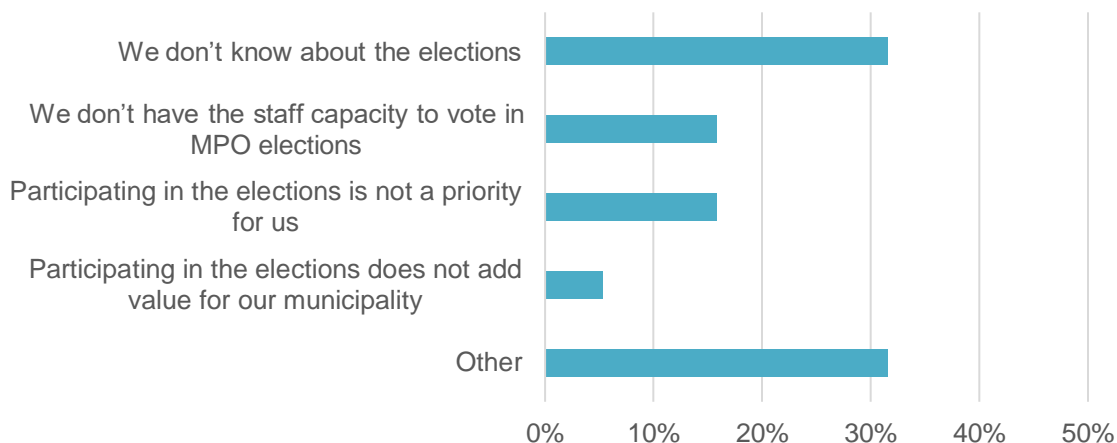
Answer Choices	Non-MPO Board Member Municipality Responses	Non-MPO Board Member Municipality Percentage
We don't receive information advertising the elections	8	42%
We don't know about the elections	7	37%
Participating in the elections is not a priority for us	3	16%
We don't have the staff capacity to vote in MPO elections	3	16%
Participating in the elections does not add value for our municipality	1	5%
Other (individual answers paraphrased below)	6	32%
Answered	19	

MPO = Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Other (individual answers paraphrased below)

- I don't know (2 responses)
- I don't know about the MPO
- We have a very small community

Figure 4
Reasons Why Non-MPO Board Member Municipality Has Not Voted in the Boston Region MPO Elections in the Past Five Years



MPO = Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Question 10: To the best of your knowledge, has the municipality you represent or work for ever run for a seat on the Boston Region MPO board?

Table 10
Municipality's Participation in Running for a Seat on the Boston Region MPO Board in the Past

Answer Choices	MPO Board Member Municipality Responses	MPO Board Member Municipality Percentage	Non-MPO Board Member Municipality Responses	Non-MPO Board Member Municipality Percentage
Yes	17	77%	9	15%
No	2	9%	23	38%
I don't know	3	14%	28	47%
Total	22	100%	60	100%

MPO = Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Question 11: To the best of your knowledge, has the municipality you represent or work for run for a seat on the Boston Region MPO board in the past five years?

**Table 11
Municipality's Participation in Running for a Seat
on the Boston Region MPO Board in the Past Five Years**

Answer Choices	MPO Board Member Municipality Responses	MPO Board Member Municipality Percentage	Non-MPO Board Member Municipality Responses	Non-MPO Board Member Municipality Percentage
Yes	17	77%	4	7%
No	3	14%	34	57%
I don't know	2	9%	22	37%
Total	22	100%	60	100%

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Question 12: If you replied “no” to either of the previous questions, why has the municipality you represent or work for not run for a seat on the Boston Region MPO in the past five years? Check all that apply.

**Table 12
Reasons Why Municipality Has Not Run for a Seat
on the Boston Region MPO in the Past Five Years**

Answer Choices	MPO Board Member Municipality Responses	MPO Board Member Municipality Percentage	Non-MPO Board Member Municipality Responses	Non-MPO Board Member Municipality Percentage
We don't have the staff capacity to run for a seat	1	33%	12	33%
The current board member representing our subregion does a good job representing our interests	0	0%	11	31%
We don't know about the elections	0	0%	9	25%
The current board members representing the at-large municipalities in the region do a good job representing our interests	0	0%	8	22%
Sitting on the board is too much of a time commitment	0	0%	8	22%
Participating in the elections is not a priority for us	0	0%	7	19%
Traveling to board meetings in Boston is too cumbersome	0	0%	6	17%
We don't receive information advertising the elections	0	0%	6	17%
Sitting on the board would not add value for our municipality	0	0%	4	11%
Other (individual answers paraphrased below)	2	67%	6	17%
Answered	3		36	

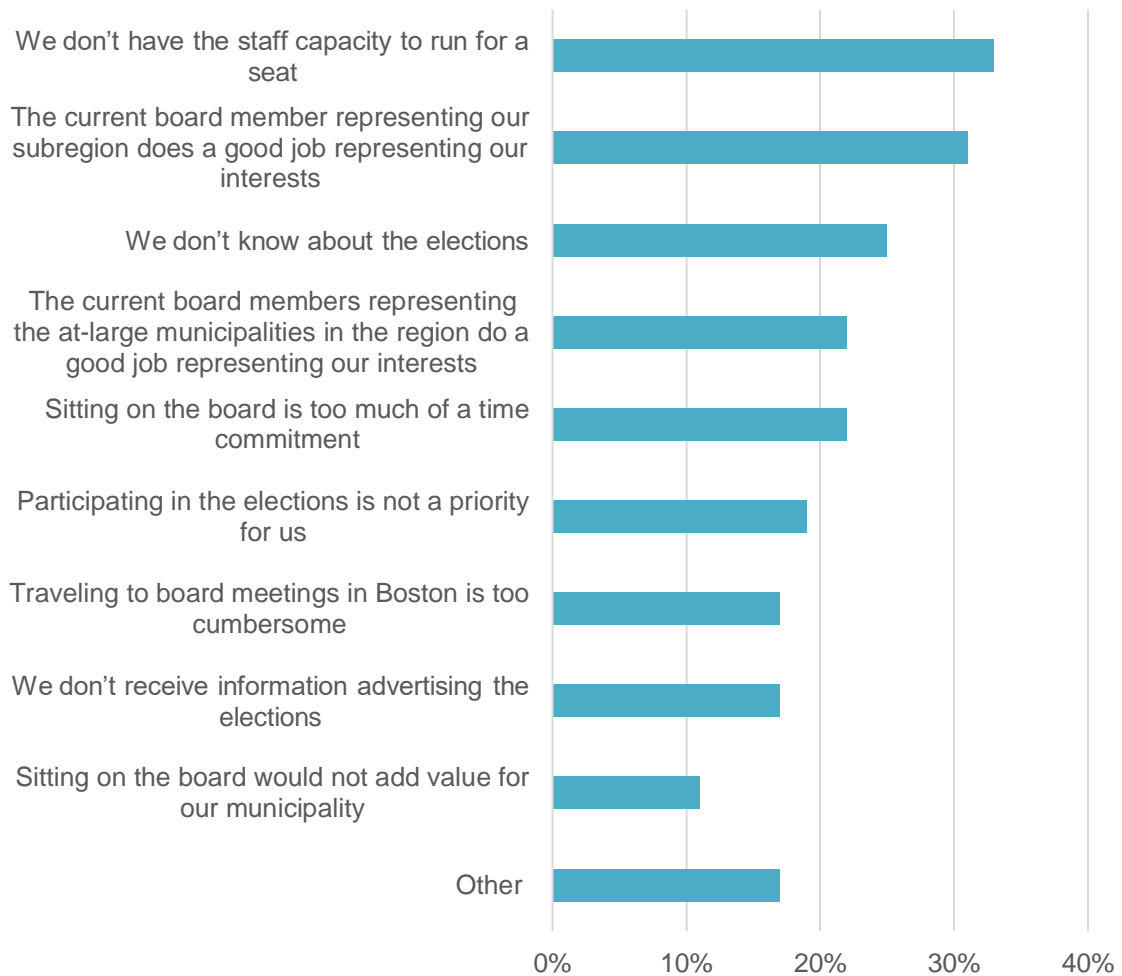
MPO = Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Other (individual answers paraphrased below)

- Responses from MPO board member municipalities:
 - o Certain cities/organizations have permanent/non-elected seats (2 responses)

- Responses from non-MPO board member municipalities:
 - o We had a seat but rotated it to another town in our region
 - o Please continue holding virtual meetings, they are much more inclusive.
 - o Considered but wasn't the right time
 - o I don't know
 - o I don't know about the MPO

**Figure 5
Reasons Why Non-MPO Board Member Municipality Has Not Run for a Seat on the Boston Region MPO in the Past Five Years**



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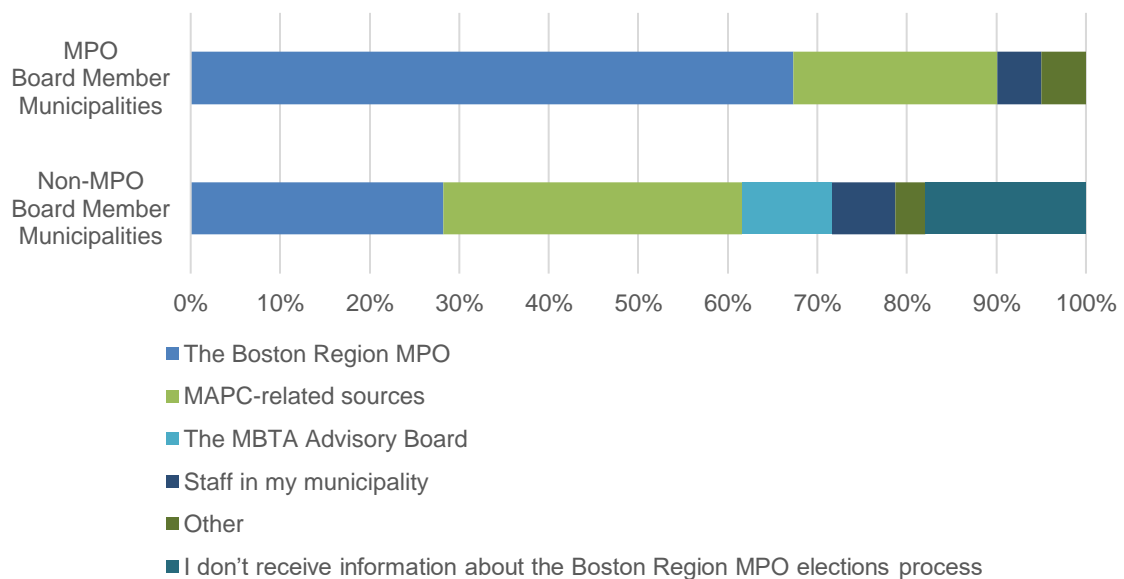
Question 13: How do you usually receive information about the Boston Region MPO municipal elections?

Table 13
How Respondents Are Informed of the Boston Region MPO Municipal Elections

Answer Choices	MPO Board Member Municipality		Non-MPO Board Member Municipality	
	Responses	Percentage	Responses	Percentage
The Boston Region MPO	15	68%	17	28%
MAPC-related sources	5	23%	20	33%
I don't receive information about the Boston Region MPO elections process	0	0%	11	18%
The MBTA Advisory Board	0	0%	6	10%
Staff in my municipality	1	5%	4	7%
Other	1	5%	2	3%
Total	22	100%*	60	100%

MAPC=Metropolitan Area Planning Council. MPO = Metropolitan Planning Organization.
 [*Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.]

Figure 6
How Respondents Are Informed of the Boston Region MPO Municipal Elections



MAPC=Metropolitan Area Planning Council. MPO = Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Question 14: Do you think the Boston Region MPO elections process is transparent and fair?

**Table 14
Respondent’s Impression on the Transparency and Fairness of the Boston Region MPO Elections Process**

Answer Choices	MPO Board Member Municipality Responses	MPO Board Member Municipality Percentage	Non-MPO Board Member Municipality Responses	Non-MPO Board Member Municipality Percentage
Yes (The process is transparent and fair)	17	77%	22	37%
No (The process is not transparent and fair)	1	5%	0	0%
I don’t know	4	18%	38	63%
Total	22	100%	60	100%

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Question 15: If you replied “no” to the previous question, please explain why.

Reasons why respondent does not think the Boston Region MPO elections process is transparent and fair (verbatim answers below)

- Responses from non-MPO board member municipalities:
 - o Because there is no outreach to town officials to introduce them to the MPO, it is hard to understand how the organization works.
 - o Do not know the organization exists or what their responsibilities include.
 - o I stated don’t know as I have not followed the process in detail to respond.
 - o Don’t know MPO.
 - o The whole process seems stacked against smaller outlying communities.

Question 16: What do you think are the biggest challenges for municipalities seeking election to the Boston Region MPO board? Choose the top two challenges, in your opinion:

**Table 15
Top Two Challenges for Municipalities Seeking Election to the Boston Region MPO Board**

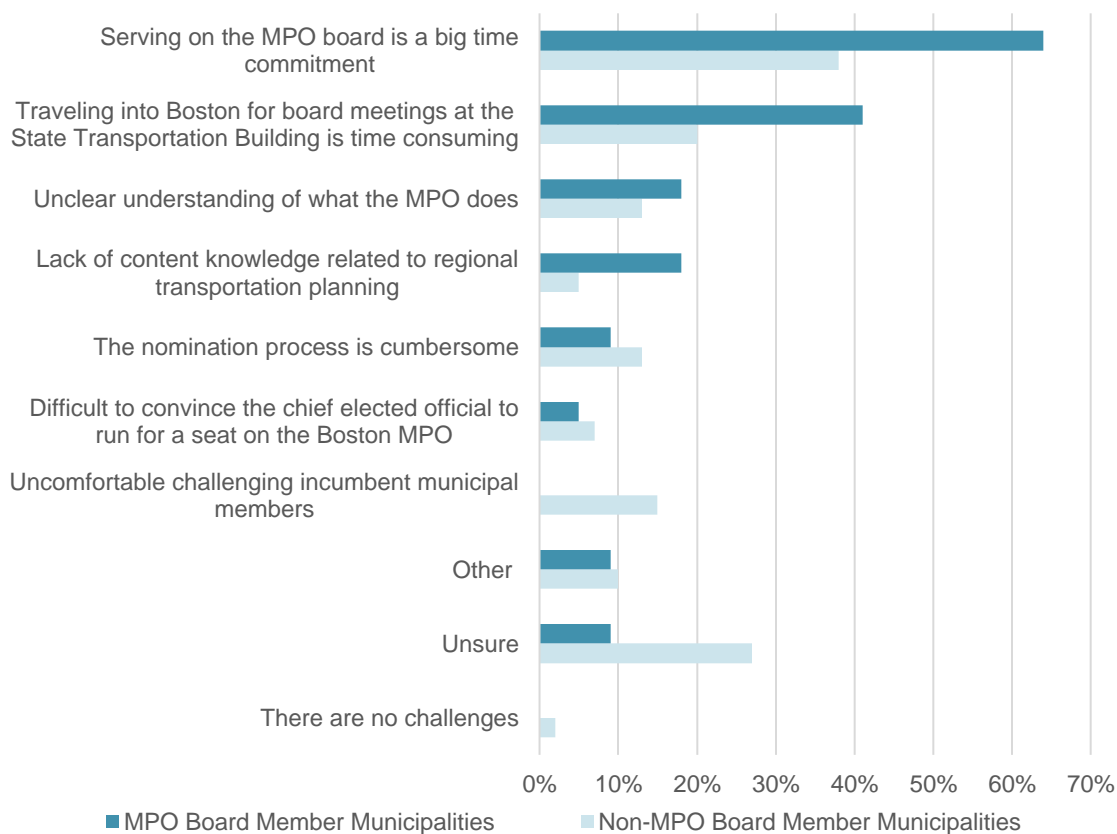
Answer Choices	MPO Board Member Municipality Responses	MPO Board Member Municipality Percentage	Non-MPO Board Member Municipality Responses	Non-MPO Board Member Municipality Percentage
Serving on the MPO board is a big commitment	14	64%	23	38%
Traveling into Boston for board meetings is time consuming	9	41%	12	20%
Unclear understanding of what the MPO does	4	18%	8	13%
Lack of content knowledge related to regional transportation planning	4	18%	3	5%
The nomination process is cumbersome	2	9%	8	13%
Difficult convincing elected officials to run for election	1	5%	4	7%
Uncomfortable challenging incumbent municipal members	0	0%	9	15%
Other (individual answers below)	2	9%	6	10%
Unsure	2	9%	16	27%
There are no challenges	0	0%	1	2%
Answered	22		60	

MPO = Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Other (individual answers paraphrased below)

- Responses from MPO board member municipalities:
 - o Lack of clear benefit of membership
- Responses from non-MPO board member municipalities:
 - o Small town/suburb disadvantage (4 responses)
 - o I don't know (2 responses)

Figure 7
Top Two Challenges for Municipalities Seeking Election to the Boston Region MPO Board



MPO = Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Question 17: What would it take to encourage more municipalities to seek election to the Boston Region MPO board?

Respondent’s suggestion on how to encourage more municipalities to seek election to the Boston Region MPO board (answers paraphrased below)

- Responses from MPO board member municipalities:
 - o More information/public outreach (5 responses)
 - o Benefits of a seat on the MPO (2 responses)
 - o Inclusion of non-planning staff
 - o Less time commitment
 - o Change in the board member makeup (2 responses)
 - o I don’t know
 - o Address logistical issues such as travel – hold meetings in other areas of the region (2 responses)

- Responses from non-MPO board member municipalities:
 - o More information/public outreach (13 responses)
 - Board election (3 responses)
 - Benefits of a seat on the MPO (3 responses)
 - MPO in general (3 responses)
 - Role and objectives of the MPO board
 - Connections between various groups
 - Sources of funding
 - Timely communication on the election (2 responses)
 - Outline what time commitments would be required from board members (2 responses)
 - o Change in the board member makeup (5 responses)
 - Term limits on board membership (3 responses)
 - Set seats for small/outlying communities (2 responses)
 - o Logistical issues (travel) (3 responses)
 - Don't require travel into Boston
 - Travel reimbursement
 - Flexibility in meeting locations (especially for communities without transit)
 - o Less time commitment (2 responses)
 - o A broader inclusion of projects for funding
 - o Less bureaucracy
 - o Consideration for small/outlying communities
 - o I don't know (3 responses)

Question 18: Do you feel that you understand the role of the elected municipal members of the Boston Region MPO board?

**Table 16
Respondent's Understanding of the Role of the
Elected Municipal Members of the Boston Region MPO Board**

Answer Choices	MPO Board Member Municipality Responses	MPO Board Member Municipality Percentage	Non-MPO Board Member Municipality Responses	Non-MPO Board Member Municipality Percentage
Yes (I understand the role of the MPO board members)	18	82%	31	52%
No (I don't understand the role of the MPO board members)	4	18%	21	35%
I don't know	0	0%	8	13%
Total	22	100%	60	100%

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Question 19: Do you feel that your local or regional transportation concerns are understood by the Boston Region MPO board?

**Table 17
Respondent’s Impression on whether Their Local or Regional Transportation Concerns Are Understood by the Boston Region MPO Board**

Answer Choices	MPO Board Member Municipality Responses	MPO Board Member Municipality Percentage	Non-MPO Board Member Municipality Responses	Non-MPO Board Member Municipality Percentage
Yes (The board understands our concerns)	15	68%	25	42%
No (The board does not understand our concerns)	1	5%	12	20%
I don't know	6	27%	23	38%
Total	22	100%	60	100%

MPO = Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Question 20: If you responded “no” to the previous question, why do you feel that way?

Reasons Why Respondent Feels that Their Local or Regional Transportation Concerns Are Not Understood by the Boston Region MPO Board (answers paraphrased below)

- Responses from non-MPO board member municipalities:
 - o Small town/suburb/lack of transit disadvantage (4 responses)
 - o Project not awarded/being slow (2 responses)
 - o MPO has different priorities from ours (2 responses)
 - o Non-transparent process
 - o No contact from the MPO
 - o Unfair control of the seat by one municipality

Question 21: In the last 21 years, 17 percent of the 97 eligible municipalities in the MPO region have held seats on the Boston Region MPO board. Seven municipalities have run for seats but have never been selected. If the MPO were to make changes to its elections process, board structure, or meeting policies, what changes do you think would encourage more municipalities to seek election to the Boston Region MPO board? Check all that apply.

**Table 18
Respondent's Preferred Changes to the Election Process
to Encourage Greater Participation by Municipalities
in the Boston Region MPO Board Election**

Answer Choices	MPO Board Member Municipality Responses	MPO Board Member Municipality Percentage	Non-MPO Board Member Municipality Responses	Non-MPO Board Member Municipality Percentage
Subregional representatives elected by the municipalities in their subregion, rather than by all the municipalities in the Boston region	14	64%	36	60%
Continue holding virtual meetings beyond the COVID-19 pandemic	14	64%	32	53%
Hold more meetings outside of the State Transportation Building in Boston	11	50%	19	32%
Term limits for elected municipal members	8	36%	26	43%
At-large city and at-large town representatives elected only by the other cities and towns in the region, respectively, rather than all the municipalities in the Boston region	6	27%	19	32%
Make meetings shorter	5	23%	5	8%
Hold meetings outside of regular business hours (prior to 9:00 AM or after 5:00 PM)	3	14%	3	5%
Hold fewer meetings	3	14%	1	2%
Hold more meetings	2	9%	0	0%
Other (individual answers below)	3	14%	5	8%

None, the current structure works fine	3	14%	2	3%
I don't know	0	0%	12	20%
Answered	22		60	

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Other (individual answers paraphrased below)

- Responses from MPO board member municipalities:
 - o More information on the MPO and MPO activities
 - o More frequent outreach

- Responses from non-MPO board member municipalities:
 - o More information on the MPO and MPO activities
 - o More frequent outreach
 - o Inclusivity

Question 22: Is There anything else you would like to share regarding the Boston Region MPO municipal election process?

Additional comments regarding the Boston Region MPO municipal process (some answers are paraphrased below)

- Responses from MPO board member municipalities:
 - o Holding a seat is a big time commitment
 - o Simplify the election process
 - o It's okay (3 responses)
 - o Elect the board member by those in their subregion

- Responses from non-MPO board member municipalities:
 - o MPO needs more outreach
 - o I don't know about the elections process (2 responses)
 - o Simplify the election process
 - o It's okay

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) operates its programs, services, and activities in compliance with federal nondiscrimination laws including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987, and related statutes and regulations. Title VI prohibits discrimination in federally assisted programs and requires that no person in the United States of America shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin (including limited English proficiency), be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity that receives federal assistance. Related federal nondiscrimination laws administered by the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, or both, prohibit discrimination on the basis of age, sex, and disability. The Boston Region MPO considers these protected populations in its Title VI Programs, consistent with federal interpretation and administration. In addition, the Boston Region MPO provides meaningful access to its programs, services, and activities to individuals with limited English proficiency, in compliance with U.S. Department of Transportation policy and guidance on federal Executive Order 13166.

The Boston Region MPO also complies with the Massachusetts Public Accommodation Law, M.G.L. c 272 sections 92a, 98, 98a, which prohibits making any distinction, discrimination, or restriction in admission to, or treatment in a place of public accommodation based on race, color, religious creed, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability, or ancestry. Likewise, the Boston Region MPO complies with the Governor's Executive Order 526, section 4, which requires that all programs, activities, and services provided, performed, licensed, chartered, funded, regulated, or contracted for by the state shall be conducted without unlawful discrimination based on race, color, age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, creed, ancestry, national origin, disability, veteran's status (including Vietnam-era veterans), or background.

A complaint form and additional information can be obtained by contacting the MPO or at http://www.bostonmpo.org/mpo_non_discrimination.

To request this information in a different language or in an accessible format, please contact

Title VI Specialist
Boston Region MPO
10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150
Boston, MA 02116
civilrights@ctps.org

By Telephone:

857.702.3702 (voice)

For people with hearing or speaking difficulties, connect through the state MassRelay service:

- **Relay Using TTY or Hearing Carry-over:** 800.439.2370
- **Relay Using Voice Carry-over:** 866.887.6619
- **Relay Using Text to Speech:** 866.645.9870

For more information, including numbers for Spanish speakers, visit <https://www.mass.gov/massrelay>