

Draft Memorandum for the Record Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee Meeting

March 13, 2025 Meeting

1:00 PM–3:11 PM, Zoom Video Conferencing Platform

Jen Rowe, Chair, representing Mayor Michelle Wu, City of Boston and the Boston Transportation Department (BTD)

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

J. Rowe welcomed committee members to the meeting of the TIP Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee. See attendance on page 11.

2. Public Comments

Pam Helinek (Town of Hudson) spoke in support of Hudson's request for funds to design the Mass Central Rail Trail from Priest Street to Felton Street. She explained that the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is funding the first phase of construction from the border with Sudbury, but TIP funding is important to continue the momentum of the trail's construction through downtown Hudson.

Eric Bourassa (Metropolitan Area Planning Council) asked when the first portion of the trail would be completed and if it would connect directly to the portion of the project under consideration for design funding.

P. Helinek responded that DCR is planning on paving as soon as possible. DCR hopes to be done paving by the end of June. The trail connects to the Assabet River Rail Trail trailhead.

3. Federal Fiscal Years (FFYs) 2026-30 TIP Project Rescoring Process— *Ethan Lapointe, TIP Manager*

Ethan Lapointe (MPO staff) began the conversation by giving the context of TIP project readiness. Project delays led to deficits in federal fiscal years (FFYs) 2026 and 2027. Staff were prompted by these delays to scrutinize the histories of these projects and identified multiple projects with development timelines of a decade or more. Determining whether project scopes had changed was a time-consuming task because project data

was often incomplete or stored in several different locations. Eight of these projects were flagged for further review and rescoring. Four of these projects had been evaluated under a 134-point scale instead of the 100-point scale developed during the FFYs 2021-25 TIP. Therefore, scores were not an effective metric for comparison.

E. Lapointe explained that some projects were unable to be scored for the FFYs 2025-29 TIP. These included the Preliminary Design of Intersection Improvements at Route 126/135/MBA and CSX Railroad in Framingham, the Design of Safety Improvements at the Interstate 95 and Route 4/225 Interchange in Lexington, and the Reconstruction of Rutherford Avenue from City Square to Sullivan Square in Boston. These projects were scored through the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) process instead of the usual TIP scoring process.

E. Lapointe stated that MPO staff had planned to rescore projects in tandem with new TIP project scoring. However, an unexpected project application surge led to decreased staff capacity for rescoring. New projects had priority of staff time, and the scoring process was less time-intensive because the newly submitted project applications aligned neatly with the scoring criteria. In addition, changes to the Access and Connectivity criteria midway through the scoring process impacted the scoring process.

E. Lapointe described possible changes to the rescoring strategy. One option would be to rescore projects in the summer. Therefore, rescoring would not conflict with scoring of new projects, giving staff more time to gather information. However, it would not be as timely for the TIP development season, and it could draw staff time away from other TIP improvement efforts that typically take place over the summer. Another option would be to ask project proponents to resubmit applications. Project information would then be consistent across new projects and legacy projects and would allow staff to create an organized base of project information. However, this would be time-intensive for proponents, and they might perceive that the statuses of their projects are in jeopardy.

Discussion

Lenard Diggins (Regional Transportation Advisory Committee) stated that he did not find fault with asking project proponents to resubmit applications if the MPO staff need updated information. He reiterated that all project proponents should be treated equally and consistently. He suggested that the scoring process (or relevant portions of the process) could be automated.

Jay Monty (City of Everett) noted that project scoring is important for project proponents to work to align with MPO goals. However, he warned against comparing projects based on their scores due to differences in project type and size.

Tom Bent (City of Somerville) asked E. Lapointe if he predicted that any municipalities would rather drop out of the TIP process than go through the rescoring process.

E. Lapointe answered that he had not heard from any municipalities who were unwilling to apply, but noted that municipal staff turnover may lead to difficulty in filling out relevant project information.

Adriana Jacobsen (MPO staff) explained that some criteria, particularly in the resilience section, were especially difficult to score because the documentation given by proponents often did not include relevant information for these criteria. For example, a 25 percent design submission from a municipal project proponent may include sufficient information to give the project a score in the “Safety” category, but may not include important information about flood risk, extreme heat mitigation, or other relevant questions.

L. Diggins noted that the project scoring offers a relatively objective evaluation and cost-benefit analysis.

Erin Chute (Town of Brookline) stated that asking proponents to reapply could be a substantial hurdle and suggested that the MPO staff have conversations with proponents before considering removing a project from the TIP.

E. Lapointe expressed that having proponents reapply would not necessarily be for the purpose of determining whether a project should be removed from the TIP; instead, this information could assist with TIP before-and-after studies, to build a better repository of project data, and to support future rescoring efforts.

J. Monty noted that complex, urban projects are more likely to have readiness issues, and that should be taken into account when considering TIP project status.

Dennis Giombetti (City of Framingham) asked how many projects have not had recent advances in their design processes.

E. Lapointe answered that he could not immediately provide an exact number, but he explained that there were several projects that had been on the TIP for more than five years.

A. Jacobsen answered that four of the “legacy projects” had not had a design update in four or five years.

4. Action Item: Initial Programming Scenarios for the FFYs 2026-30

TIP—*Ethan Lapointe, TIP Manager*

Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

- TIP Scenarios ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))
- Lynnfield Rail Trail 100 percent Design Submission ([pdf](#))

E. Lapointe explained that the initial programming scenarios that were presented do not program any new projects in FFYs 2026 and 2030. Instead, the scenarios focus on attaining fiscal constraint—particularly on addressing the significant deficit in FFY 2027. The MPO staff had asked proponents of projects at risk of delay to provide updates, but only three relevant project proponents have responded (Boston, Brookline, and Swampscott).

E. Lapointe reiterated the readiness constraints of the four TIP scenarios. First, there were multiple delays of projects in FFY 2025 that were reprogrammed to FFY 2026, requiring MPO staff to propose Amendment 10 to resolve the budget surplus. Next, there were also significant delays of projects in FFY 2026 that were reprogrammed to FFY 2027, leading to a budget surplus of almost \$60 million. However, there were minimal project delays in FFY 2027, resulting in a buildup of projects programmed in that year. As a result, FFY 2027 has a deficit of more than \$80 million. FFY 2028 also has a deficit, albeit a much smaller one at just more than \$11 million. FFY 2029 has a surplus of about \$5 million, and FFY 2030 has a relatively low surplus of just less than \$50 million compared to the final years of previous TIP cycles. This low funding amount is due to delays from FFY 2029 to FFY 2030 and from funding obligations from advanced construction projects.

E. Lapointe gave an updated report of readiness statuses for FFY 2026. Initially, MPO staff proposed delaying seven projects from FFY 2026 to FFY 2027, out of a total of nine projects. Recent developments have brought this number down to five projects, but MPO staff continue to monitor the other projects for potential delays. These changes reduce the FFY 2027 deficit and the FFY 2026 surplus. One example is Boston’s Improvements on Boylston Street project, which was flagged for delay to FFY 2027. To address the delay, the City of Boston is removing the intersection of Brookline Avenue and Park Drive from the project scope. This change will allow the project to be programmed in FFY 2026. Another example is Hingham’s Improvements on Route 3A project, which was delayed to FFY 2027 due to increased project scope. Local

stakeholders are currently working with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) to remove the portions of the scope that contributed to the delay so that the project can remain programmed in FFY 2026. However, due to the project's significant cost estimate of more than \$30 million, most of the scenarios fund this project across FFYs 2026 and 2027 to mitigate the impact if the project is delayed to FFY 2027. Lastly, E. Lapointe discussed Wakefield's Main Street Reconstruction. This project had a recent cost increase of about \$10 million, increasing the total cost from \$18 million to \$28 million. All the scenarios account for these cost increases.

E. Lapointe then discussed new projects included in all four scenarios. First, he discussed project # 613163, the Lynnfield Rail Trail Construction from Ford Avenue to Nichols Lane (Phase 1). This project, previously programmed in the Statewide Highway Program, is now programmed in the Regional Target program in all four scenarios with a cost of \$6,062,695. This project has reached 100 percent design with an expected advertisement date in FFY 2026.

E. Bourassa noted that this trail would connect to trails in Danvers, Topsfield, Peabody, and more towns in the MPO region. Other municipalities, including Malden and Melrose, are working to support connections to this trail as well.

E. Lapointe discussed two projects in Chelsea: project # 609532, Targeted Safety Improvements and Related Work on Broadway, and project # 611983, Park Street and Pearl Street Reconstruction. The former project will now be funded by the Statewide Highway Program in exchange for the Lynnfield Rail Trail being funded with the Regional Target program. As for the latter project, the City of Chelsea has requested that the project be funded in FFY 2031 in order to reduce the number of simultaneous projects undergoing construction in the small city. E. Lapointe noted that this project has not experienced any delays, and he explained that funding status in FFY 2031 may be uncertain because it is outside of the current TIP programming cycle.

E. Lapointe mentioned that all four scenarios include design funding for four new projects in FFY 2026, bringing the total number of design projects funded in that year to six and the total funding dedicated to design to \$6,688,480. In addition, each scenario incorporates a Project Design Set-Aside fund, though the funding amount will target only two or three projects per year. This lower funding level will reduce the risk of oversubscription in future TIP years when these projects apply for construction funding. Other Massachusetts MPOs are also interested in starting design funding programs, and limiting the amount of projects coming from the Boston Region MPO will reduce the burden on MassDOT offices involved with design contracts.

E. Lapointe discussed the four new design projects:

- Acton: Reconstruction of Route 2A/119 (Great Road), from David Road to Harris Street
 - This project addresses the safety of vulnerable road users on a street where pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure do not exist.
- Hudson: Design of the Massachusetts Central Rail Trail, from Felton Street to Priest Street
 - This trail extension will connect to existing and future trail work.
- Malden: Design of Improvements on Route 60 (Phase 1 and 2), Franklin Street to Lynn Street
 - This project will invest in bus signal priority and active transportation infrastructure on a corridor connecting Malden Center with several destinations, including the Northern Strand Trail.
- Salem: Broad Street and Dalton Parkway Corridor Project (Design Only)
 - This project invests in safety and active transportation improvements near new housing development, public schools, and downtown Salem.

E. Lapointe discussed the Community Connections applications, all of which are included in all four scenarios:

- Boston Bikeshare Replacement (20 Stations, 380 Docks)
- Brookline Bikeshare Expansion of Three Stations and 10 E-Bikes
- Cambridge Replacement of Seven Stations and 123 Classic Bikes
- Chelsea Bikeshare Expansion (Three Stations, 28 Classic Bikes, Three E-Bikes)
- Somerville Bikeshare Replacement (40 Classic Bikes, 40 Docks, 10 Slabs)
- Marblehead Bicycle Rack Procurement (22 Racks, 117 Spaces)
- Newton Bicycle Rack, Shelter, and Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) Procurement (67 Racks, Two Shelters, 12 RRFBs)

E. Lapointe summarized that all scenarios include all seven Community Connections projects, all four new design projects, and funding for the first phase of the Lynnfield Rail Trail. In addition, \$29,975 is programmed in FFY 2026 to support greenhouse gas (GHG) monitoring to evaluate the air quality impacts of TIP projects. Transit providers have indicated that they are willing to remove the set-aside funding for Transit Transformation in FFY 2027 in order to reduce the deficit in that year. E. Lapointe noted that all four scenarios attain fiscal constraint in different ways.

E. Lapointe explained Scenario 1A. This scenario involves delaying two projects in Lynn that have not yet reached 25 percent design:

- Lynn Rehabilitation of Essex Street
 - This project was programmed in FFY 2026 and subsequently delayed to FFY 2027. This scenario suggests delaying the project an additional year to FFYs 2028 and 2029. The total project cost is about \$20 million.
- Lynn Rehabilitation of Western Avenue
 - This project is programmed over three years (FFYs 2028-30) with a total project cost of about \$45 million. Due to the project's design status, this scenario proposes delaying the project to FFYs 2030-32.

This scenario would create risk for the outer years of the TIP by obligating funding in FFYs 2031 and 2032.

E. Lapointe described Scenario 1B. This scenario staggers delays throughout FFYs 2027-29. As projects are delayed from FFY 2027 to FFY 2028, a deficit is created in FFY 2028. To resolve this, additional projects must be delayed from FFY 2028 to 2029, and so forth:

- Norwood Intersection Improvements at Route 1 and University Avenue
 - This project was programmed in FFY 2026 and delayed to FFY 2027. Scenario 1B delays this project an additional year to FFY 2029.
- Brookline Washington Street Reconstruction
 - This project is not delayed, but funding is shifted from FFY 2028 to FFY 2029 in order to address the deficit in FFY 2028.
- Lynn Western Avenue Reconstruction
 - This project is also delayed to FFY 2029 to address the FFY 2028 deficit and to mitigate concerns about readiness. In addition, its first year of funding is reduced from \$20 million to \$10 million.
- Malden Spot Pond Brook Greenway
 - This project is delayed from FFY 2028 to FFY 2030 to address readiness concerns and the deficits in FFYs 2028-29.
- Swampscott Rail Trail Construction
 - This project is delayed from FFY 2028 to FFY 2030 to address readiness concerns and the deficits in FFYs 2028-29.

Four of these projects are not yet at 25 percent design, and a few of the cost estimates are several years old. This scenario has a small surplus in FFY 2029 and less available funding in FFY 2030 compared to Scenario 1A. In summary, though this scenario is financially conservative and reduces the amount of funding delayed into future TIP cycles, funding available for new projects is limited.

E. Lapointe described Scenario 1C, which rebalances funding across four projects rather than delaying projects:

- Hingham's Route 3A project is programmed entirely in FFY 2026, which could be risky based on its readiness status. However, this alleviates a portion of the FFY 2027 deficit.
- The McGrath Boulevard project in Somerville has reduced funding in its first two years of programming (\$25 million in FFY 2027 instead of \$30 million and \$25 million in FFY 2028 instead of \$33.1 million).
- Norwood's Intersection Improvements project would be funded over FFYs 2027 and 2028 instead of being fully funded in FFY 2027.
- Similarly to the McGrath Project, Lynn's Western Avenue project would be reduced to \$10 million in its first two funding years, FFYs 2028 and 2029.

This scenario has the lowest amount of funding in FFYs 2026 and 2030 for new projects, but it also programs the fewest delayed projects. The McGrath Boulevard project and the Western Avenue project would have a combined cost of more than \$60 million in 2030, which could create a significant deficit if either of the projects are delayed. In summary, moving funding between years does not resolve underlying cost issues or readiness risks.

E. Lapointe discussed Scenario 1D. This scenario is similar to Scenario 1A in that both of Lynn's projects are delayed; however, the delays are less severe and a third project, Boston's Reconstruction of Rutherford Avenue, is also delayed:

- Lynn's Essex Street project is delayed to FFY 2029.
- Lynn's Western Avenue project is delayed to FFY 2029 instead of FFY 2030 as programmed in Scenario 1A.
- Boston's Rutherford Avenue project is delayed to FFY 2030 instead of FFY 2029.

This scenario shifts large funding obligations into FFY 2031 and beyond. However, this project has about \$20 million of surplus in FFY 2029 and about \$45 million of surplus in FFY 2030, leaving substantial funding for new projects.

D. Giombetti asked if there was a link between the two Lynn projects beyond the fact that they are in the same city. He also asked about the status of the two projects' designs.

E. Lapointe answered that he did not believe that there was a link, though he noted that the projects are in close geographic proximity. He explained that neither project had

achieved 25 percent design and that both projects had not had a design update in more than six years.

D. Giombetti suggested that the committee have a conversation about reconsidering the funding status of projects that have experienced frequent delays or that have not moved through the design process in a timely manner. He noted that it is difficult to program new projects when funding in the outer years of the TIP is typically devoted to delays of currently programmed projects.

J. Rowe proposed that the committee discuss this after the conclusion of E. Lapointe's presentation.

E. Lapointe explained that all four scenarios have benefits and risks. The discussions at this committee meeting would be continued at the March 20, 2025, MPO board meeting and at the March 27, 2025, TIP Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee meeting. He asked the committee to consider how to use the surplus funding in FFYs 2026 and 2030. E. Lapointe concluded the discussion by noting that although the rescoring process did not follow its expected schedule, MPO staff nonetheless gained valuable insight into knowledge gaps and project risks through the process. In addition, E. Lapointe pointed out that none of the four scenarios eliminate all readiness issues or nullify the risk of cost increases.

John Bechard (MassDOT) commented on Scenario 1C. He stated that MassDOT was not confident that Hingham's Route 3A project could be funded in FFY 2026. He also recommended that the City of Lynn comment on the readiness concerns of their projects.

J. Monty commented that the intention of scenario development is first and foremost to achieve fiscal constraint. He also asked about the uncertainty of the readiness of projects that had not yet achieved 25 percent design.

J. Bechard explained that E. Lapointe had put together these scenarios based on MassDOT's project readiness recommendations, which do not take into account project cost or any other factors besides the ability to deliver the project within the given year. He also explained that delaying a project into a new federal fiscal year does not necessarily delay the project by a full calendar year; for example, if a project is originally intended to be programmed in the fourth quarter of FFY 2026, a delay to FFY 2027 could simply mean a one-month delay into the first quarter of the new federal fiscal year. He noted that there are many unpredictable risks to project readiness that make it difficult to envisage when a project will be ready to advertise for construction. At the weekly Priority of Projects meeting, where many of these issues are discussed,

MassDOT tends to focus on projects that are programmed within the next couple of years instead of the outer years of the TIP.

J. Rowe agreed that it is especially difficult to determine project readiness for projects programmed in the outer years of the TIP. J. Rowe commented on the risk of Scenario 1C and asked the committee for their thoughts.

L. Diggins suggested that project costs may go up due to the possibility of a national recession. He proposed developing a method for removing projects from the TIP, such as removing all projects that have not achieved 25 percent design.

Tom Bent (City of Somerville) asked J. Bechard if the Highway District had any issues with Scenario 1C.

J. Bechard answered that he would investigate T. Bent's question after the meeting.

T. Bent commented that a recommendation was made in 2021 by the TIP Cost Change Committee to require all projects to achieve 25 percent design to be considered for TIP funding. A grace period was given to provide project proponents time to adjust to the new rule, but the length of the grace period was not determined. He suggested that the grace period should end.

John Romano (MassDOT) disagreed with the strategy of removing projects from the TIP. He recommended having project proponents speak to the readiness issues of their projects at MPO board meetings or TIP Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee meetings.

D. Giombetti asked the committee to take a hard stance on projects with significant delays.

J. Monty asked at what point in the project development process is a project manager assigned.

E. Lapointe answered that he believed it depends on when the project is scoped.

5. Members' Items

There were none.

6. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by the Regional Transportation Advisory Council (Lenard Diggins) and seconded by the Town of Brookline (Erin Chute). The motion carried.

Attendance

Members	Representatives and Alternates
City of Boston	Jen Rowe
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Brad Rawson
	Tom Bent
Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)	Eric Bourassa
Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)	Chris Klem
Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)	John Bechard
MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA)	Tyler Terrasi
MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham)	Dennis Giombetti
Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Acton)	-
Regional Transportation Advisory Council (RTAC)	Lenard Diggins
Town of Arlington	-
Town of Brookline	Erin Chute

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Aleida Leza	-
Ben Mueller	MassDOT
Benjamin Coulombe	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA)
David Koses	City of Newton
Felicia Webb	Cape Ann Transportation Authority (CATA)
Hanna Switekowski	MBTA Advisory Board
Jay Monty	City of Everett
Jim Nee	MWRTA
Joe Rubino	Stantec
John Romano	MassDOT
John Tomasz	Town of Lynnfield
Jon Rockwell	The Engineering Corp. (TEC)
Joshua Klingenstein	MBTA
Joy Glynn	MWRTA
JR Frey	Town of Hingham
Ken MacNulty	Town of Lynnfield
Melissa Santley	MassDOT
Pam Helinek	Town of Hudson
Rich Kosian	Friends of the Lynnfield Rail Trail
Rick Azzalina	Stantec
Sandy Johnston	MBTA
Tim Bethke	TomTom
Vince Inglese	Friends of the Lynnfield Rail Trail

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Annette Demchur
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Ethan Lapointe
Lauren Magee

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