



TRANSREPORT

APRIL 2007

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE BOSTON REGION METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

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MEETING CALENDAR

For the most recent information on the following public meetings and others that may have been scheduled after TRANSREPORT went to press, go to www.bostonmpo.org or call (617) 973-7119.

AT THE STATE TRANSPORTATION BUILDING, 10 PARK PLAZA, BOSTON

April 11 (Wednesday)

Regional Transportation Advisory Council. Conference Room 4. 3:00 PM

April 12 (Thursday)

Boston Region MPO Transportation Planning and Programming Committee: Proposed Amendment to the 2007–2010 Transportation Improvement Program. Conference Rooms 2 and 3. 10:00 AM

April 18 (Wednesday)

Massachusetts Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board. Executive Office of Transportation. Conference Room 1, Suite 3170. 1:00 PM

Calendar continued on p. 2

City and Town Seats Open on MPO; Nominations Invited

Now is the time for municipalities to step forward if they want to have a vote on the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The process for nominating candidates for two seats up for election is underway, and the MPO is encouraging all of the eligible municipalities in the region to increase their

participation in transportation planning by seeking membership.

Each year, one city and one town are elected to three-year terms on the MPO. All 101 municipalities in the MPO region can vote in the election process. This year, the seats now held by Everett and Framingham are open

for election. The two regional members of the MPO, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) and the MBTA Advisory Board, conduct the election process on behalf of the MPO.

The MPO region benefits from geographic diversity in local members. For this rea-

• Elections cont. on p. 3

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) MEETING

The MPO will hold its annual Municipal TIP Input Day on April 26. RSVP forms are due on April 6. Please see the calendar for the meeting location and time.

Contact Hayes Monison at hayesm@ctps.org or (617) 973-7129 for more information or to RSVP.

MPO PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN UPDATE

The MPO is planning to update its public participation plan and is looking for your advice. Future editions of TRANSREPORT will have more information about opportunities for your involvement in this process. In the meantime, please send your ideas for the MPO public participation plan to: publicinformation@bostonmpo.org.

EMERGENCY BOND BILL SIGNED

A \$1.47 billion emergency borrowing package that allocates over \$900 million for transportation improvements across the commonwealth and authorizes additional Chapter 90 monies for cities and towns to use on road maintenance and repairs passed through the state legislature in just over one week

• Bond Bill cont. on p. 6

TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY LEADS WALKBOSTON TOUR

The state's Secretary of Transportation, Bernard Cohen, led members of WalkBoston on a walking tour of the Seaport District and downtown waterfront prior to the organization's annual meeting on March 22.

WalkBoston is a nonprofit organization that works to



Secretary of Transportation Bernard Cohen addressed members of WalkBoston at the Institute of Contemporary Art.

improve pedestrian conditions in Massachusetts. For more information, go to www.walkboston.org.

The members of the Boston Region MPO: Executive Office of Transportation, Cities of Boston, Everett, Newton, and Salem, Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority Advisory Board, Massachusetts Highway Department, Massachusetts Port Authority, Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Regional Transportation Advisory Council, Towns of Bedford, Framingham, and Hopkinton

MBTA Park-and-Ride Data Now Online

The MPO recently released data related to park-and-ride lots at MBTA stations. The inventory, which was conducted as part of the MPO's Mobility Management System (MMS), includes park-and-ride lots at 107 commuter rail stations, 29 rapid transit stations, 3 ferry terminals, and 2 express bus lots. Parking lots owned and/or operated privately or by municipalities were included in the inventory, along with MBTA-owned lots.

Compared with previous inventories of park-and-ride lots at MBTA stations in 2000 and 2002, fewer lots fill to capacity now and the percentage of parking spaces utilized in the morning has decreased. This is likely due to the expansion of park-and-ride lots at some stations and an overall increase in

parking fees and transit fares.

Despite these declines, 54 percent of MBTA stations with park-and-ride lots reach



Forge Park/Route I-495 park-and-ride facility in Franklin

parking capacity. Seventy-seven percent of the nearly 33,000 parking spaces systemwide are utilized on a typical weekday.

In addition to collecting parking data, the MPO's staff also reported on station amenities, such as the avail-

ability of benches and shelters, and whether the stations are ADA-accessible.

The data collected and analysis conducted for this inventory are available on the MPO's Web site at www.bostonmpo.org/bostonmpo/resources/CMS/cmspnr.htm.

The MMS is an ongoing MPO work program for collecting and gathering performance data about the region's transportation systems. As part of the MMS, data are analyzed and used to provide planners and decision-makers with tools to help prioritize transportation projects and program funds.

For more information about the MMS, visit www.bostonmpo.org/bostonmpo/resources/CMS/cmsmain.htm or contact Jared Fijalkowski at j_fijalkowski@ctps.org.

New England's Trade with China on the Rise

MARITIME AND AIR SHIPPING ACTIVITY INCREASING

Cargo-shipping activity at the Conley Terminal in South Boston increased 7.3 percent last year as New England's sea trade with China continued to grow. The Massachusetts Port Authority (Massport) reported that the container ship service between Boston and Chinese ports was a key factor in the increase in the volume of goods transiting through the Port of Boston. The service is provided by China Ocean Shipping Company and its partners "K" Line, Yang Ming Line,

and Hanjin. New services from Europe and more efficient loading and unloading of ships at the terminal also contributed to the increases.

In March the first direct air cargo link between Boston and Asia took flight. The Yangtze River Express, a subsidiary of the Hainan Group and Hainan Airlines, will fly a Boeing 747 three times a week from Boston to Shanghai. The volume of air shipments from New England to China is projected to grow by 50 percent with the new service.

"China is one of our most



Massport's Paul W. Conley Terminal

important export markets, and in the past five years alone, Massachusetts exports to China have increased over 200 percent," said Governor Deval Patrick. "We have seen a tremendous interest in China among Massachusetts firms and expect that the Yangtze River Express direct air cargo service will open doors for even more local exporters to access the emerging Chinese market."

Calendar cont. from p. 1

April 19 (Thursday)

MassHighway Public Hearing: Proposed West Corner Culvert Replacement (Route 228) in Hull, Cohasset, and Hingham. *Hingham Town Hall, Central South Meeting Room, 210 Central Street, Hingham. 7:00 PM*

April 25 (Wednesday)

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

MassHighway Public Hearing: Rockland Street Bridge rehabilitation. *Hingham Town Hall, Central South Meeting Room, 210 Central Street, Hingham. 7:00 PM*

April 26 (Thursday)

Boston Region MPO Transportation Planning and Programming Committee: Transportation Improvement Program Municipal Input Day. *Conference Rooms 2 and 3. 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM*

April 30 (Monday)

MBTA Rider Oversight Committee. *Conference Rooms 1, 2, and 3. 4:30 PM*

May 3 (Thursday)

Boston Region MPO Transportation Planning and Programming Committee. *Conference Room 4. 10:00 AM*

AT OTHER BOSTON AREA LOCATIONS

April 9 (Monday)

Urban Ring Phase 2: Proposed Alternatives and Evaluation. *Boston Arts Academy, 174 Ipswich Street, Fenway. 6:30 to 8:30 PM*

April 13 (Friday)

MOVE MASSACHUSETTS: Bernard Cohen Secretary of Transportation and Public Works. *Brown Rudnick Berlack Israels, Eighteenth Floor, One Financial Center, Boston (across from South Station). 8:10 AM. To be added to the building's visitor list, send an e-mail to movemass@usa.net.*

April 17 (Tuesday)

Urban Ring Phase 2: Proposed Alternatives and Evaluation. *Somerville High School Auditorium, 81 Highland Avenue, Somerville. 6:30 to 8:30 PM*

May 1 (Tuesday)

Boston College Citizen Seminar: MetroFuture Plan Unveiling. *Hyatt Regency Hotel, One Avenue de Lafayette, Boston 8:00 AM (Complimentary breakfast at 7:30 AM) Please RSVP at www.metrofuture.org.*

MPO Calls for Candidates

• Elections *cont. from p. 1*

son, election rules stipulate that no MAPC subregion, except the Inner Core, can have more than one municipality serving on the MPO at a time.

Municipalities from MAPC subregions currently represented on the MPO by members not up for election (North Shore Task Force, Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination, and South West Advisory Planning Committee) are not eligible to run this year. All other municipalities are encouraged to do so.

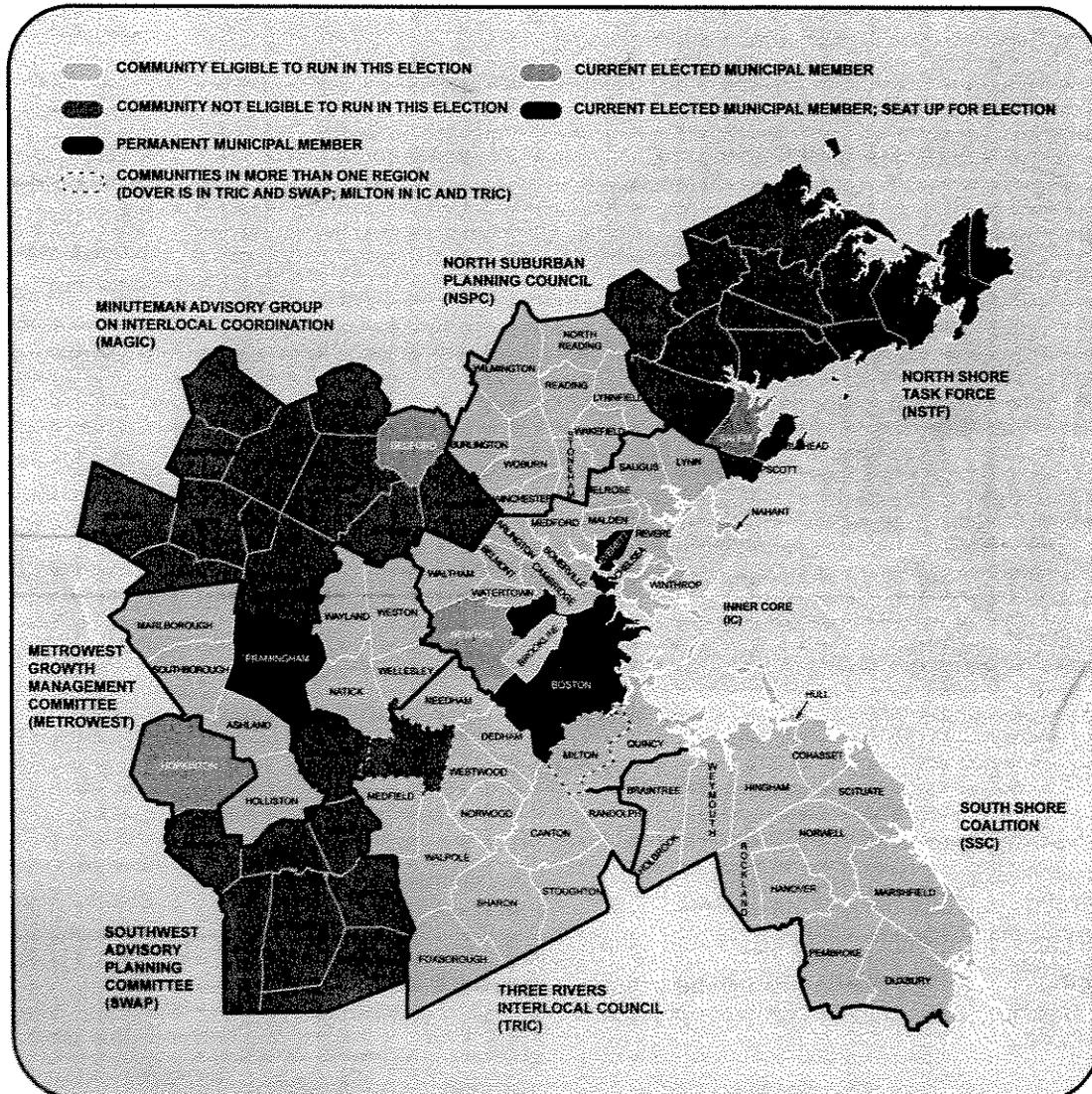
Notification of the election and a call for nomination papers were sent to municipal chief elected officials in late March.

Here's how to run for a seat on the MPO:

- Gather nomination signatures from five chief elected officials in the MPO region and submit them to MAPC by 5:00 PM on May 3; an official may sign for only one city and one town.
- Prepare your candidate's statement.
- Return your nomination materials by the May 3 deadline; they are the source of an informational mailing about all candidates that will be sent to all municipalities.
- Participate in the Meet the Candidates event, which will provide an opportunity to learn more about the candidates and discuss your concerns.
- Vote in the election, which will take place at the MAPC annual meeting on May 23.

Stay tuned to the next issue of *TRANSREPORT* for further details on the Meet the Candidates event and the election.

If you have questions about the MPO elections, contact Barbara Lucas of MAPC by e-mail at blucas@mapc.org or by phone at (617) 451-2770, ext. 2043. Current information on the election is posted on the MPO's Web site at www.bostonmpo.org/bostonmpo/involved/election/index.html and on MAPC's Web site at www.mapc.org/whats_new.



MBTA Station Improvements

GRAND OPENING OF CHARLES/MGH STATION

The grand opening of the new Charles/MGH Red Line station was celebrated on March 27 with a ribbon-cutting ceremony in the glass-enclosed structure that replaces the old station headhouse. Federal Transit Administrator James Simpson, Secretary of Transportation Bernard Cohen, MBTA General Manager Daniel Grabauskas, and Boston Mayor Thomas Menino were in attendance to mark the occasion.

The new station opened to the public on February 17 after a \$34.4 million overhaul to improve accessibility and comply with the

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

The modernized station provides barrier-free pedestrian access to the station and platform. The new entrance is at street level, with elevators and escalators leading to the platform. Other new features include wider staircases, electronic message boards, public-address speakers, and tactile warning strips on the platform.

The improvements followed a public process in which the MBTA held more than 30 public meetings and collected input from residents, city and state officials, and the business and healthcare community in the Charles Circle area.



Charles/MGH Station



North Station concourse

NORTH STATION CONCOURSE RENOVATION TAKING SHAPE

The 50,000 commuters who use North Station each day have begun to enjoy the results of a \$5 million renovation and expansion of the MBTA's commuter rail concourse. The project, initiated in response to passenger feedback, involved moving the station's commuter rail tracks and platforms back by nearly 80 feet to provide 20,000 additional square feet of space. Station enhancements include the provision of tables, chairs, and benches in a temperature-controlled waiting area, larger rest-

rooms, and an overhead electronic message board with schedule and track information.

The expanded concourse eases the congestion that occurs at the station, particularly when events at the TD Banknorth Garden coincide with evening rush hour. The second phase of the project, which is entirely funded by Delaware North (owner of the TD Banknorth Garden), will include additional retail outlets, food and beverage services, and access to ATM machines. It is expected to be completed in the coming months.

EOT to Report on Urban Ring Progress

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation (EOT), working with the Earth Tech consultant team, is making steady progress on the alternatives analysis for Phase 2 of the Urban Ring Circumferential Transit Project. This month, EOT and the project team will

report on this progress at public meetings in Everett, Boston (Fenway), and Somerville.

(Please see the calendar for times and locations of the Boston and Somerville meetings. The Everett meeting will have occurred by the time

TRANSPORT goes to press.)

The Urban Ring is a proposed circumferential transit system that would provide enhanced service in a "ring" that passes through rapidly growing residential neighborhoods, employment centers, and large institutions in

Boston, Brookline, Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett, Medford, and Somerville. It is planned for implementation in three phases. Phase 1 includes increased bus service in the Urban Ring corridor. Phase 2, the subject of

• Urban Ring *cont.* on p. 5

Public Meetings on Urban Ring

• Urban Ring *cont. from p. 4*

the current planning effort, would create a system of overlapping bus rapid transit (BRT) routes with connections to the MBTA's existing subway lines, commuter rail lines, and major bus hubs in the corridor. Phase 3 would add rail rapid transit in a portion of the corridor.

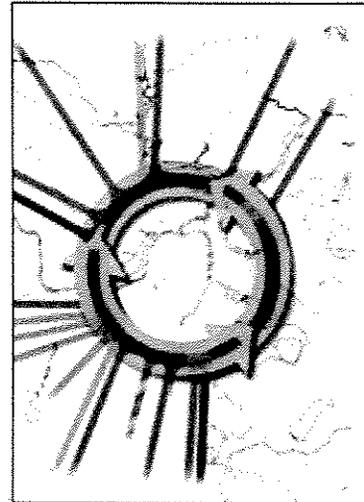
At the upcoming public meetings, the project team will present information on the Urban Ring Phase 2 project background, the four proposed project alternatives, and the status of the alternatives analysis. These alternatives have been developed and refined through a

comprehensive public involvement process. The public process has entailed frequent meetings of the project's Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), which includes representatives from the Urban Ring corridor's cities and towns, its neighborhood groups, and its major institutions. The process has also included three major public meetings held in December 2006 and numerous briefings provided to neighborhood and advocacy groups.

In coming months, the project team will continue to assess the benefits, impacts,

and costs of the various alternatives and to work with the various stakeholders to identify the most beneficial alternatives and segments. The best segments will then be combined into the best possible plan for implementing the Urban Ring Phase 2, a recommendation that will be known as the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA). The LPA, the various project alternatives, and the alternatives analysis will be described in a report called a Revised Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement. The report will be completed by

November 30, 2007, to meet the filing deadline set for the project by the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs.



Boston Region MPO Activities

BOSTON REGION MPO ACTION ITEMS

The MPO's Transportation Planning and Programming Committee began its discussion of the comments received on March 15 on draft JOURNEY TO 2030, the MPO's long-range transportation plan, in addition to the recommendations made at the JOURNEY TO 2030 workshops held during the public review period. The Committee will make a recommendation for MPO endorsement of the Plan at its meeting on April 5 following a discussion of the comments received during the review period, which ended on March 27. See the calendar on page 1 for details on this meeting and other MPO activities.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL UPDATE

At the March meeting, the Advisory Council received an update on the draft JOURNEY TO 2030 and a briefing on Operation Lifesaver, the international educational program on highway/railroad grade crossing safety. Meeting attendees also discussed the content of the Advisory Council's comment letter on the draft JOURNEY TO 2030.

The Advisory Council is tentatively scheduled to hear briefings at its April meeting on the I-95 Corridor Coalition, the Northeast Rail Operations Study, and the final version of JOURNEY TO 2030 (see the meeting calendar on page 1 for meeting details).

ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE MBTA (AACT) UPDATE

At the February meeting, the MBTA announced that transfer service between THE RIDE and EZ Trans, the paratransit service of the Merrimack Valley Transit

Authority (MVRTA), is now available. The new transfer service, which is provided through Greater Lynn Senior Services, expands the range of travel options for THE RIDE users to include the 3/4-mile corridor on each side of MVRTA fixed bus routes operating in Amesbury, Andover, Haverhill, Lawrence, Merrimac, Methuen, Newburyport, and North Andover.

For more information about the service, including the days of operation and service hours for EZ Trans, visit the MVRTA Web site,

www.mvrta.com/SpecialServices/ADAPAGE.htm, or contact MVRTA at (978) 373-1184, ext. 100.

The MBTA's Office for Transportation Access staff announced that all of the 85 #8 Green Line cars that were ordered have been delivered; 77 are already providing service.

At the March meeting, members were reminded that nominations are being accepted for the May 23 election of officers. Contact Janie Guion at (617) 973-7507 (voice), (617) 973-7089 (TTY), or guion@ctps.org for more information.

• Bond Bill *cont. from p. 1*

and was signed by Governor Deval Patrick on March 23.

The bond bill provides \$810 million for improvements and repairs to the state's highways and bridges, and it secures an additional \$986 million of federal grants. One hundred million dollars will be allocated to the design work on four transit projects that the Commonwealth is committed to as air quality mitigation for the Central Artery/Tunnel project: the MBTA Green Line extension to Medford and Union Square in Somerville; 1,000 additional parking spaces in the MPO region; improved service and new stations along the Fairmount commuter rail line; and a subway connector between the Red and Blue Lines.

Other transportation infrastructure needs the bill addresses include the construction of a bridge in Quincy, the reconstruction of Route 9 in Shrewsbury, and a road-widening project in Taunton. Funding for other non-transportation-related state capital expenditures are included in the bill as well.

State Facing Funding Shortfall for Transportation Projects

TRANSPORTATION FINANCE COMMISSION REPORT RELEASED

Over the next 20 years, Massachusetts will face a \$15 billion to \$19 billion shortfall in transportation funding according to the Transportation Finance Commission, an independent body charged by the legislature to study the financial condition of state transportation agencies and the long-term capital and operating needs of the transportation system.

The funding shortfall, which the Commission called a conservative estimate, refers only to the operating and capital needs for maintaining the existing transportation system in a state of good repair. The estimate does not include funding for the expansion or enhancement of the transit and highway system, beyond those projects that the state is legally required to build as mitigation for the Central

Artery/Tunnel project.

The Commission's findings, released on March 28 after a two-year investigation, have called attention to an impending finance problem facing a state with an aging infrastructure system. While the commonwealth's roads, bridges, and transit system are in a state of decline, state transportation agencies are struggling with systemic financial problems, the Commission reported. The Commission is drafting recommendations for solutions to address costs and revenue shortfalls.

The report, *Transportation Finance in Massachusetts: An Unsustainable System*, is available at www.eot.state.ma.us.

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