



WI-FI EXPANDING TO ALL COMMUTER RAIL LINES

Page 2

MPO SURVEY

Page 3

MPO ACTIVITIES

Page 3

MPO TRIVIA

Page 4

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. A photo ID is required to access most meeting sites.

AT THE STATE TRANSPORTATION BUILDING, 10 PARK PLAZA, BOSTON

January 8 (Thursday)

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

Boston Region MPO Transportation Planning and Programming Committee: Suburban Mobility and Transportation Demand Management Subcommittee. MPO Conference Room, Suite 2150. 1:30 PM

January 14 (Wednesday)

Regional Transportation Advisory Council Freight Committee. Conference Room 4. 1:00 PM

Boston Region MPO Transportation Planning and Programming Committee: Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Subcommittee. MPO Conference Room, Suite 2150. 1:30 PM

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

Calendar continued on p. 2

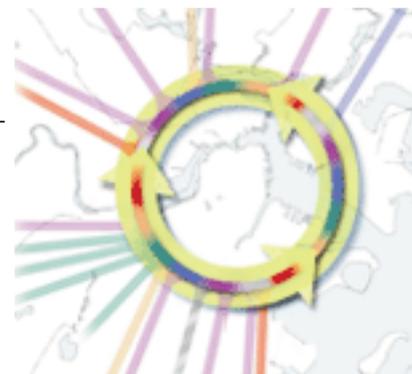
Urban Ring Public-Review Period Underway

COMMENTS ACCEPTED THROUGH FEBRUARY 9; PUBLIC HEARING ON JANUARY 6

Throughout the month of January, the Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works (EOTPW) and the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) will continue to accept public comments on the Urban Ring Phase 2 Revised Draft Environmental Impact Report/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (RDEIR/ DEIS), which was released for public review in November.

The document details the proposed plan for a bus rapid transit (BRT) system that would provide circumferential transit service connecting locations in Boston, Brookline, Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett, Medford, and Somerville, and improve connections between points on the existing rapid transit and commuter rail systems.

As proposed, the project would include dedicated roadways for 60-foot articulated buses, including a 1.5-mile busway tunnel through



the Longwood Medical and Academic Area, and new transit stations. High-frequency service would be provided at peak travel periods (ranging from every 10

• [Urban Ring cont. on p. 4](#)

Arborway Bus Study Released

In December the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) released the MBTA Transit Signal Priority Study: Arborway Corridor, which assessed options for improving MBTA bus travel time and schedule reliability along the Arborway corridor. The study focused on a two-mile segment of the corridor from Forest Hills Station to Huntington Avenue, which is served primarily by the MBTA's Route 39 bus.

Boston Region MPO staff used computer modeling to evaluate the benefits of employing traffic-system management measures — such as improvements to signal timing and geometric configuration in intersections — as well as traffic signal coordination and transit signal priority (TSP). TSP is a strategy for moving transit vehicles through signalized intersections quickly by equipping them with detectors that can trigger an early

• [Arborway cont. on p. 3](#)

Bridge Program Underway

Significant progress is being made on the Patrick Administration's \$3 billion Accelerated Bridge Program (ABP). The goal of the program, which was approved by the legislature in August 2008, is to reverse a trend that, left unchecked, would increase the number of structurally deficient bridges in Massachusetts from 543 (as of May 2008) to nearly 700 over the course of the next eight years. Since

• [Bridges cont. on p. 2](#)

The members of the Boston Region MPO: Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works, Cities of Boston, Newton, Salem, and Somerville, 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

Bridge Projects Announced

• Bridges *cont.* from p. 1

October, when initial funds for the program were made available, work began on 41 projects totaling more than \$175 million, the hiring of engineers and other necessary staff got underway, and 14 design consulting contracts were procured.

In addition to improving the condition of the Commonwealth's bridges, the ABP is expected to stimulate economic development and job creation and save money by allowing projects to be completed sooner. (The Federal Highway Administration estimates that road and bridge construction costs increase from 9 to 15 percent per year due to inflation.) The ABP will employ innovative techniques such as offering bonuses to contractors who

deliver projects ahead of schedule, imposing penalties for late delivery, streamlined environmental permitting, project bundling, and single-phase construction.

2009-2011 BRIDGE LIST DEVELOPED

The 2009–2011 bridge list developed by MassHighway and the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), in coordination with the Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works, identifies preliminary estimates totaling \$975.7 million for 54 bridge projects located in the Boston Region MPO area. It includes the Boston–Cambridge Longfellow Bridge, which is estimated at \$267.5 million and slated for advertising in the spring of 2011, and \$242.6 million for the

Quincy–Weymouth Fore River Bridge, which is also scheduled for advertising in the spring of 2011. The com-



The Longfellow Bridge is one of the structures that the Accelerated Bridge Program will address

plete list of bridge projects, which also includes dates for design completion and end of construction, is available at www.mass.gov/accelerated bridges.

Wireless Internet Service Expanding to All Commuter Rail Lines

Riders on the Framingham/Worcester commuter rail line have been enjoying free wireless technology service on their commutes since last spring, when the MBTA launched its Wi-Fi Commuter Rail Connect Pilot Project. The project was such a success on that line that the MBTA is expanding the service to all commuter rail lines. The service enables riders to access the Internet using laptop computers, cell phones, and other Wi-Fi-enabled devices while enroute.

“The positive feedback we’ve received from commuters who are using Wi-Fi on the

trains has been fantastic,” said Lt. Governor Timothy Murray, who worked with the MBTA to advance this



Lt. Governor Timothy Murray (right) and MBTA General Manager Daniel Grabauskas next to a Wi-Fi-equipped commuter rail coach at North Station

service when he was the mayor of Worcester. “It became clear early on in the pilot that this service should be expanded to all commuter rail trains.”

The MBTA plans to equip more than half of its 410 commuter rail coaches for wireless Internet connection. Approximately 30 coaches per month will be retrofitted, and will be moved into service as they come online. By spring of 2009, all commuter rail lines will have at least two Wi-Fi-equipped coaches per train. Riders will be able to identify those coaches by the Wi-Fi sign on the outside of the coach.

The MBTA is partnering with technology providers AT&T, WAAV, and Terminal Exchange Systems to provide this service.

Calendar cont. from p. 1

January 22 (Thursday)

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

January 26 (Monday)

MBTA Rider Oversight Committee. *Conference Rooms 1, 2, and 3. 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM*

January 28 (Wednesday)

Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA. *Conference Room 4. 1:00 PM to 3:30 PM*

AT OTHER BOSTON AREA LOCATIONS

January 6 (Tuesday)

EOTPW Public Hearing: Urban Ring Phase 2. *Leverett Saltonstall Building, Second Floor, Conference Rooms C and D, 100 Cambridge Street, Boston. 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM*

January 8 (Thursday)

MBTA Senior and Transportation Access Pass Registration. *Wakefield Council on Aging, 30 Converse Street, Wakefield. 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM*

January 13 (Tuesday)

MBTA Senior and Transportation Access Pass Registration. *Lynn Senior Center, 8 Silsbee Street, Lynn. 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM*

January 14 (Wednesday)

MassHighway Public Hearing: Reconstruction of East Main Street in Marlborough. *City Hall, Memorial Hall, 140 Main Street, Marlborough. 7:00 PM*

January 21 (Wednesday)

MBTA Senior and Transportation Access Pass Registration. *Newton Senior Center, 345 Walnut Street, Newtonville. 12 noon to 3:30 PM*

Meetings sponsored by the Boston Region MPO are conducted in accessible locations, and materials can be provided in accessible formats and in languages other than English. If you would like accessibility or language accommodation, please contact the MPO at (617) 973-7100 (voice), (617) 973-8855 (fax), (617) 973-7089 (TTY), or e-mail publicinformation@bostonmpo.org.

Working Group Formed for Arborway Transit Improvements

• Arborway cont. from p. 1

green light or lengthen the amount of time a light stays green.

The study addressed the applicability of implementing TSP with present bus stop locations and with bus stops consolidated, as well as alternatives such as adding curb extensions (to eliminate the need for buses to pull to the side of the street for stops) and upgrading signal coordination and signal equipment. The study results and recommendations may be found on the Boston Region MPO's website, www.bostonmpo.org.

In light of the recommendations, the MBTA, the

Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works, and the City of Boston have assembled a Citizens Working Group and are holding meetings to discuss opportunities for transit improvements along the corridor. The next meeting of the Working Group will be held in February.

The MPO-funded study was initiated based on findings from the MPO's Mobility Management System (MMS), which monitors the performance of transportation facilities in the MPO region. The study was also advanced to address concerns stemming from the removal of the Green Line Arborway Restoration project, which

would have added a new light rail line along the Arborway, from the original group of State Implementation Plan (SIP) transit projects (those projects the Commonwealth is committed to building as mitigation for the Central Artery/Tunnel project). The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency approved changes to the SIP projects last summer. (See the August 2008 issue of *TRANSREPORT* for more information.)

The City of Boston Transportation Department, the Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works, and the MBTA participated in the study, which was conducted by MPO staff.

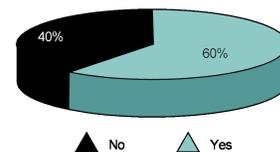
Take Our Survey!

The Boston Region MPO has introduced a survey feature on its website to find out what people are thinking about timely transportation topics. Visit www.bostonmpo.org to participate.

Last month we asked . . .

Have higher gas prices and increased awareness of emissions impacts on the environment encouraged you to change your travel mode (car, transit, bike, walk)?

. . . and you responded:



Boston Region MPO Activities

BOSTON REGION MPO ACTION ITEMS

The Transportation Planning and Programming Committee approved the MBTA Transit Signal Priority Study: Arborway Corridor at its December 4 meeting (see the article on page 1 for details). Also at that meeting, the Committee heard a presentation on the findings of the Massachusetts Transportation Finance Commission, which identified a \$14-19 million shortfall in available funding for the maintenance of the commonwealth's transportation infrastructure. The Committee discussed these findings in relation to the upcoming amendment to the regional transportation plan, *JOURNEY TO 2030*.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL UPDATE

At the December meeting, the Advisory Council heard two timely presentations: one by Lucy Garliauskas, Division Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration, and another by Brian Kane, of the MBTA Advisory Board. Both focused on transportation funding and fiscal forecasts.

Ms. Garliauskas discussed the upcoming reauthorization of the federal transportation legislation. A new bill, to be developed over the upcoming months, will

establish national transportation policy, set priorities for investment in infrastructure, and provide funding. Congress is also considering an economic stimulus bill that would support transportation projects that could be constructed within six months of enactment. Congress is expected to take action on the stimulus bill following the presidential inauguration in January.

Mr. Kane detailed the crisis-level fiscal condition of the MBTA. To maintain service levels and fares into fiscal year 2010, the MBTA will need legislative assistance. Without such assistance, the MBTA might need to resort

to service cuts, increased fares, and layoffs, he explained. The Advisory Council has established an ad hoc committee to further consider and develop comments on these findings.

ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE MBTA (AACT) UPDATE

The MBTA's Department of Systemwide Accessibility (SWA) reported that the MBTA has formed a committee to develop specifications for accessibility-related features on new Orange and Red Line subway cars. The committee is comprised of representatives from SWA, AACT, the Boston Center for

Independent Living, THE RIDE Advocacy Project, the MBTA Rider Oversight Committee, and the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind. The MBTA also began the first phase of a project to reduce gaps between subway cars and platforms.

MBTA staff members have been visiting senior centers and other locations in the region to issue Senior, Transportation Access Pass (TAP), and Blind Access CharlieCards to eligible MBTA customers. (See the calendar section on page 2 for this month's outreach sites.)

What's Your Transportation Savvy?

The following is a new feature of *TRANSREPORT* that we hope our readers will enjoy. See below for answers to these questions:

1. What is the percentage of people living within the city limits of the 60 largest cities in the United States who drive alone to work?
2. Can you name the five U.S. cities in each of the following categories?
 - a) The highest percentage of people who drive alone to work
 - b) The highest percentage of transit users
 - c) The highest percentage of people who walk to work
 - d) The highest percentage of people who bike to work
 - e) The highest percentage of people who have no cars

Urban Ring Comments Being Accepted

• Urban Ring *cont. from p. 1* minutes, to every 3 minutes in sections of the corridor with heavy demand), and advanced communications systems would be used to reduce delay for BRT vehicles and provide real-time traveler information.

The recommendations included in the RDEIR/DEIS may be refined based upon ongoing public and stakeholder involvement. EOTPW will host a public hearing on January 6 at the Saltonstall Building in Boston (see calendar section for details). Members of the public may voice comments at that hearing or provide comments in writing, addressed to EOEAA Secretary Ian A. Bowles, by February 9, to the following address:

Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs;
Attn: MEPA Office, EOEAA

#12565; Richard Bourre, Assistant Director; 100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900; Boston, MA 02114; fax: (617) 626-1181; e-mail: Richard.Bourre@state.ma.us

Copies may be sent to:

Ned Codd, Director of Program Development; EOTPW; 10 Park Plaza, Room 4150; Boston, MA 02116

The RDEIR/DEIS is available at www.theurbanring.com, at public libraries in the affected communities, and by contacting Regan Checchio at (617) 357-5772, extension 14, or rchechchio@reginavilla.com.

For more information, contact Ned Codd at (617) 973-7473.

TRANSREPORT

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