



495/METROWEST

PARTNERSHIP

Leaders for Regional Prosperity

September 2, 2011

Mr. David J. Mohler
Chair, Transportation Planning and Programming Committee
Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization
10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150
Boston, MA 02116

RE: Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization's draft Transportation Improvement Program, FFY 2012-2015

Dear Mr. Mohler:

On behalf of the 495/MetroWest Partnership, please accept the following as our official comments regarding the draft *Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)* for FFY 2012 to FFY 2015.

The 495/MetroWest Partnership is a non-profit advocacy organization serving thirty-two communities, over half a million residents, and an employment base of approximately \$17 billion, by addressing regional needs through public/private collaboration, and by enhancing economic vitality and quality of life while sustaining natural resources. The Partnership is concerned about regional constraints and limitations, and conducts numerous initiatives on transportation, workforce housing, and water resources.

The 495/MetroWest region has experienced significant growth over recent years which has resulted in opportunities and benefits, as well as presented a series of complex and conflicting transportation challenges. If ignored, these challenges threaten the quality of life and economic wellbeing of a region that has become an economic engine for the Commonwealth. Our regional transportation challenges affect the state's ability to remain economically competitive. These challenges include: increasing traffic congestion, an increase in vehicle miles traveled, highway capacity issues, gaps in public transit, and aging transportation infrastructure.

The Partnership commends the Boston MPO for the transparency of their evaluation process but we are concerned that the scoring system favors dense urban communities, particularly with existing transit infrastructure. We agree with the establishment of regional-level criteria and welcome consideration of the "economic benefit" of a project as part of the MPO's policies. However, we feel the scoring system should be based on a percentage of possible points for a community versus possible points for the region due to some criteria being unattainable for many of our communities within the Boston Region MPO. This holds particularly true in the case of "reducing auto dependency" and "improving transit reliability" as well as other transit accessibility points. The Partnership has long been an advocate for increased transit options in our region and we will continue to push for alternative modes of transportation. Nevertheless, our existing transit infrastructure does not allow the region a fair comparison with urban communities within the Boston MPO region under the current project evaluation scoring system. We ask for your consideration for regional equity when scoring projects.

We recognize that there are not enough financial resources to meet all the transportation demands of the Greater Boston region; the fiscal challenges related to the state's transportation

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infrastructure have been well documented. The draft TIP for FY 2012-2015 is another clear indication of the dire condition of transportation financing in the Greater Boston region.

The Partnership strongly supports the recommendation to fund **Route 9/Oak Street in Natick (Project #601586)** in FFY 2012. The Partnership believes this project is important to the continued economic prosperity of the region and in particular to the large and growing employer, Mathworks. Additionally, improvements to this major intersection will reduce congestion, resulting in improved air quality and greater public safety access.

Additional projects included in the FFY 2012 element of the 2012-2015 TIP supported by the Partnership include:

- **Assabet River Rail Trail Design in Acton/Stow (Project #604531)**
- **I-95 Bridge over Green Street in Foxborough (Project #605414)**
- **Central Street Bridge over the Sudbury River in Framingham (Project #602839)**
- **Interstate Maintenance of I-495 from Franklin to Milford (Project #606169)**
- **Route 2 Resurfacing in Acton, Boxborough and Littleton (Project #604472)**

We strongly endorse the above mentioned projects in the 495/MetroWest Region and support their being scheduled in the FFY 2012 portion of the FFY 2012-2015 TIP. The Partnership is also pleased to see Year 3 funding for the **Acton Rail Shuttle** listed under the Clean Air and Mobility Program in FFY 2012. The Boston MPO's recognition of the transit gaps and the use of CMAQ funding to address transit needs in the 495/MetroWest region is much appreciated.

The Partnership strongly supports the recommendation to include the **Reconstruction of Route 126 in Framingham (Project # 606109)** in FFY 2013. The use of these funds in a timely manner is imperative to the project's realization, which will result in improvements to congestion, air quality, and livability. Additional projects in the FFY 2013 element of the TIP supported by the Partnership include:

- **Cochituate Rail Trail in Framingham**
- **Crosswalk Beacon at Church and Main Streets in Hopkinton**
- **Route 140 Improvements (Project #604988)**
- **Interstate Maintenance of I-95 in Foxborough**

The Partnership recognizes and appreciates the number of projects within the 495/MetroWest Region in the first two years of the FFY 2012-2015 TIP. However, this number drops significantly in FFY 2014 and 2015, resulting in only the following two projects, which we support:

- **I-90 Ramp over I-495 in Hopkinton (Project #605774)**
- **Interstate Maintenance of I-495 from Foxborough to Franklin (Project #606176)**

Again, we recognize the inadequate and uncertain level of funding for transportation projects, but would like to see a greater distribution of the limited funds to the 495/MetroWest region. The lack of sound financial footing for transportation infrastructure going forward continues to jeopardize the state's and the region's economic recovery and future success. Due to these financial straits major projects that would have significant regional impact sit idle in the TIP's "Universe of Roadway Projects for Discretionary Funding" list. Below is a listing of projects within the Partnership's service area, for which we would like to reiterate our support.

<i>ID</i>	<i>Municipality</i>	<i>Name</i>
604531	Acton, Maynard	Assabet River Rail Trail

604532	Acton, Carlisle, Westford	Bruce Freeman Memorial Bicycle Path, phase 2A
606223	Acton, Concord	Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Construction (Phase II-B)
1316	Framingham	Downtown Corridor Traffic and Streetscape Improvements
955	Framingham	Route 126 (Route 9 to Concord St.)
1066	Framingham, Natick	Cochituate Rail Trail
601359	Franklin	Pleasant Street
602929	Holliston	Upper Charles Trail
1006	Hopkinton	School Street/W. Main Street Intersections
606043	Hopkinton	Route 135 at Route 85
604732	Hudson	Washington Street Bridge
601906	Hudson	Cox Street Bridge
1460	Littleton	Harvard Street
604231	Marlborough	Traffic Signal Improvements - Intersection of Route 20 at Concord Road
604811	Marlborough	East Main Street
604810	Marlborough	Route 85 South (Maple Street)
604697	Marlborough	Farm Road
360	Medway	Route 109 (Main Street)
602134	Medway	Village Street
602364	Millis	Village Street
605034	Natick	Route 27 (North Main Street)
1130	Natick	Route 9/Route 27 Intersection
604989	Southborough	Route 30/Main Street Rehabilitation

1064	Southborough	Cordaville Road/Route 85 Rehabilitation
971	Sudbury	Old Sudbury Road (Route 27)
1069	Sudbury	Route 20/Wayside Inn Road
1015	Sudbury	Route 20/Landham Road Intersection
1037	Sudbury	Route 20/Horsepond Road
1305	Sudbury	Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, Phase 2E
601579	Wayland	Route 27 (Main Street)/Route 30 (Commonwealth Road)
1163	Wrentham	Taunton Street

The addition of several projects in the 495/MetroWest region to the Universe of Projects list has not gone unnoticed. However, we eagerly await many of these projects to be programmed on the TIP. The lack of movement on these projects and omission of others threatens the economic vitality of the 495/MetroWest region, a region that has become a critical component of the Commonwealth's economy.

The Partnership would like to once again commend the Boston MPO for the reliable funding stream provided to the MetroWest RTA (MWRTA). The MWRTA has created substantial transit options for the residents of Ashland, Framingham, Holliston, Hopkinton, Marlborough, Natick, Sherborn, Southborough, Sudbury, Wayland, and Weston. The MWRTA continues to expand service and convenience through new routes and bus tracking technology. Moreover, the MWRTA has shown leadership and ingenuity in increasing the interoperability between the MBTA and the MWRTA with projects like the CharlieCard service. However, the transportation challenges and need for transit services continue to grow, requiring consistent and equitable financial contributions from the state. Currently, the MWRTA has only limited Saturday service and no Sunday service, unlike many of its counterparts throughout the state. Much like with transportation projects, transit projects are underfunded.

Finally, the Partnership would like to suggest a new level of transparency to the TIP. Throughout the Draft FFY 2012-2015 TIP, there is evidence of project cost changes without much explanation. It would be helpful going forward to know exactly how those numbers total, either in the positive or the negative, and if in the positive, how the newfound funds can and will be dispersed for the many waitlisted projects. Such transparency will further highlight the need for greater transportation revenues in order for the Commonwealth to meet its infrastructure maintenance, enhancement and expansion backlog.

The Partnership is well aware that transportation needs in the 495/MetroWest region far outweigh the financial resources for any given fiscal year in the entire Boston Region MPO's TIP. However, we encourage you and the other members of the Boston MPO to recognize the economic impact of delaying projects in a region responsible for one out of every eleven jobs in the state. Projects like Oak Street/Route in Natick and Route 126 in Framingham must be addressed sooner rather

than later to successfully confront major congestion, safety, air quality, and sustainable development issues in the 495/MetroWest region.

If there are any questions regarding these projects or our commentary on the TIP, please contact Jessica Strunkin at 774.760.0495 x.103, or by email at Jessica@495partnership.org. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Paul F. Matthews
Executive Director



Jessica Strunkin
Deputy Director of Public Policy & Public Affairs

cc: 495/MetroWest Legislative Delegation
Secretary Richard A. Davey